

FALL

1988

MIDNIGHT

GRAFFITI

\$4.95

D A R K F A N T A S Y

EMERALD CITY BLUES

by

STEVEN R.
BOYETT

plus

RAY
GARTON

JOE
LANSDALE

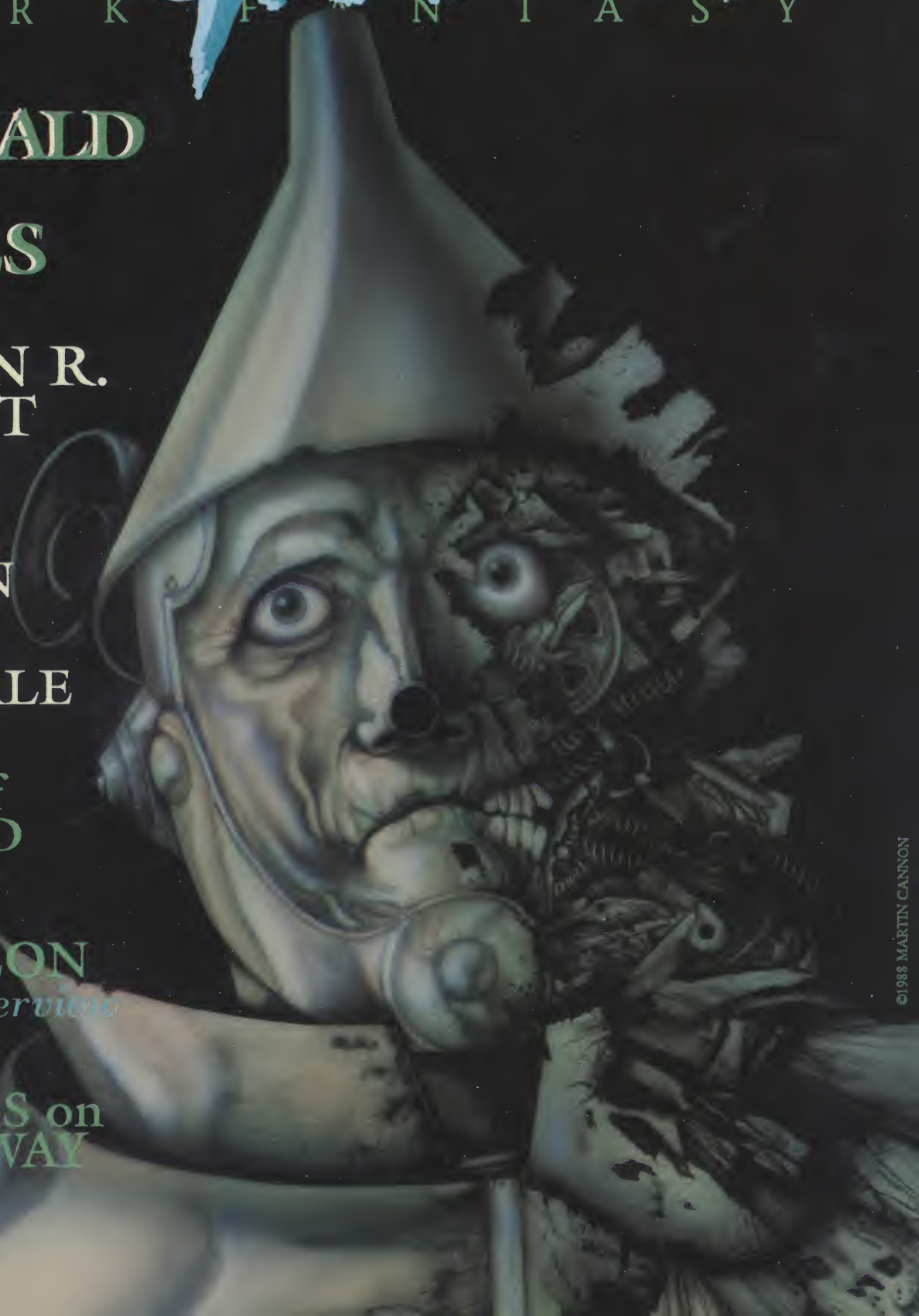
preview

BOOK of
the DEAD

TED
STURGEON
the last interview

humor

ZOMBIES on
BROADWAY





686 47

C O N T E N T S

F R O M B E Y O N D

NEWS of NOTE and other information
plus HEADLINES you may have missed. 4

F E A T U R E S

A SPECIAL preview, introduced by David
J. Schow, of Skipp And Spector's Book of
the Dead 38

INTERVIEW with Ray Garton, one of dark
fantasy's most outspoken writers. 26

The Ouija Board presents a previously
unpublished TED STURGEON interview 56

H U M O R

PIK-A-PLOT Horror guide 13

ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY dance off the
screen and into your hearts 44

F I C T I O N

STEVEN R. BOYETT Emerald City Blues 16

JOE LANDSDALE Not From Detroit 51

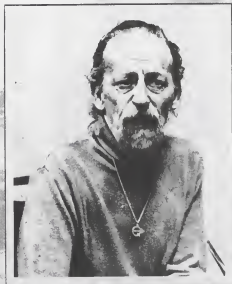
RAY GARTON Crucifax, Ch...
censored...teen 31

O T H E R

PORTFOLIO by John Wayne Gacy 84

HIS LAST INVENTION 76

RECOMMENDATIONS and reviews 68



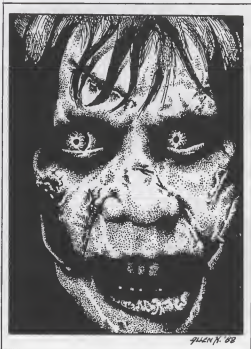
CRUCIFAX

From the Publishers

Whooboy! Thanks for all the cards and letters, all the kind comments and helpful suggestions. There was a small minority of readers who were shocked, appalled and disgusted—but we think we'll get the rest of you this time.

Is it too soon to talk about next issue? Is it premature, before you've even gotten past the third page in this issue, to talk about issue three, our Stephen King special, chock full of fun, information, contests, excerpts and a brand-new story by you-know-who? Is it crass and mercenary of us to try to whip up the slaving herds of fans out there before issue two is even partially digested? Hmmm. Maybe so.

Forget everything we said—just dip your fingers in the following pages. Laugh, sigh, wipe a tear from your eye. Address your complaints to Jim Van Hise. Send your congratulations, checks and money orders to the staff. Let us know you care—stop reading, walk up to the cashier and *pay* for this magazine instead of standing in the aisle!



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T H I S I S S U E

The fiction this issue is penned (processed, typed) by three of horror's major talents; Steven R. Boyett, Ray Garton and Joe Lansdale.

Ray Garton is represented by an interview and a chapter from his novel *Crucifax*. This chapter is not one you'll soon find in paperback, if ever, and Ray explains why.

Joe Lansdale's entry may be a change of pace for Joe's fans. For us, it revealed the warm, gushy interior we knew was there all the time.

Steve Boyett will tell you he's not really a horror writer and while that's true in avocation, Steven's story "Emerald City Blues" chilled us to the marrow, as did the stories he contributed to the anthologies *Silver Scream* and the upcoming *Book of The Dead*. Come to think of it, both Ray Garton and Joe Lansdale have stories appearing in those anthologies as well. Quite the little horror mafia we have this issue—Lansdale, Garton, Boyett, and, in the *Book of the Dead* preview, Lansdale and Boyett are excerpted, along with ooky tidbits by Stephen King, Ed Bryant, Robert McCammon, Brian Hodge and David J. Schow.

Have fun and don't get wet!



From Beyond



PET SEMATARY



YOU DEAD, ME DEAD, WE ALL DEAD



STEPHEN KING FINALLY GETS a story filmed in Maine. Paramount and Laurel Entertainment are filming King's chilling bestseller *Pet Sematary* with Fred Gwynne featured as Jud Crandall, the elderly neighbor who befriends Louis Creed and his family when they move to Ludlow, Maine. Richard Rubenstein, George Romero's former partner and business manager, produces, Mary Lambert (*Siesta*) directs.

Pet Sematary also features Denise Crosby, late of *Star Trek: TNG* fame, along with Dale Midkiff and Brad Greenquist. King scripted for release next year.

Elton John and Bernie Taupin are collaborating on a Broadway musical based on Anne Rice's *Interview With a Vampire*. And elsewhere on the stage, we're sad to report that the 7 million dollar production of *Carrie* opened and closed in London within a couple of months.

For those of you who thought *Gothic* missed the mark, there's hope. Ken Russell's latest excursion into horror is receiving rave reviews. *The Lair of the White Worm* was previewed at the Montreal Film Festival to the delight of those in attendance. The Bram Stoker tale is updated and treated to Russell's peculiar sensibilities. Said one reviewer, "Russell dips into his *Altered States* cornucopia of transdimensional special effects, creating startling tableaux of 3-D palpability, no specs needed. He also succeeds in evoking a shocking sensuality from the gore-splashed scenes." Sounds like our kind of movie, coming to a theater near you from the folks at Vestron.

Beetle Juice II has been announced, with Director Tim Burton and star Michael Keaton said to be "interested" in reteaming for the sequel.

Clive Barker's follow-up to *Hellraiser*, entitled *Hellbound* (*Hellraiser II*) is also scheduled for an October release. The entire staff was treated to an advance screening here in Lost Angeles at the famed Mann's Chinese Theater—along with what seemed like thousands of slavering skinheads, punks and delinquents (our kind of people) who set the tone for the screening. Several gallons of stage blood, cow entrails and inspired special effects later, *Hellbound* screeched to a finish. Clive executive-produced this one—directing chores were ably handled by Tony Randel.

The August release of *Nightmare on Elm Street IV: The Dream Master*, smashed box office records for an independent release. The \$12.8 million Freddie raked in from 1765 screens around the country was the largest three-day gross for any independent release and also topped the record for any film released so late in the summer. This kind of sequelmania brings a more pleasant meaning to the words "recurring nightmares." Attaboy, Freddie.

The Shadow Over Innsmouth

Director Stuart Gordon, who has previously brought H.P. Lovecraft's *Reanimator* and *From Beyond* to the screen, is currently in preproduction on *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*.

"I've been working on several projects," Gordon explains, "and the one I've been working on the hardest is the H.P. Lovecraft story 'Shadow Over Innsmouth,' with the people turning into fish-frogs or frog-fish or whatever the hell they are. I've been having a good time on that. I would like it to be as close to Lovecraft as I could, in that I love the story. I think this is one of his best stories, so this is one which is especially close to my heart."

Gordon has done some location scouting in Providence and is even considering filming there or in Massachusetts, where the original story is set. "I went to the town that Lovecraft used as the inspiration for his story, which is a place called Newberryport. I stopped off there and felt it was about time I got to Lovecraft's stomping grounds, see his neighborhood and get a feeling what it must have been like apart from just reading about it."

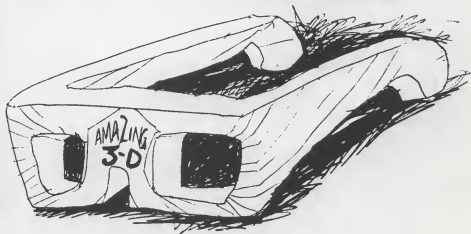
Regarding Lovecraft's appeal to him,



THE HELL YOU SAY

Gordon said, "He has a strange sense of humor. I mean, it's a very wry one, too, and I think you have to read a lot of Lovecraft to learn some of the in-jokes of his group. There's references to his friends and little gags in his stories, though it is definitely true there are very few knee-slappers in an H.P. Lovecraft story."

—Dennis Fisher





E.T. or not E.T.

BEFORE YOU PLUNK DOWN 5 BUCKS FOR THE paperback edition of *Communion*, Whitley (*The Hunger*, *Wolfen*, *War Day*) Streiber's 1987 *New York Times* bestseller—detailing what he insists is a true story of his abduction by space creatures—why not check out the June 28th issue of *The National Enquirer*. Whitley tells all in a revealing interview, synopsisizing the events of the book for those with short attention spans.

"Eventually I found myself in a small gray room," Streiber told *The Enquirer*. "There I was examined by a group of 4-1/2-foot-tall, gray creatures with huge, dark, luminous eyes."

"They performed bizarre medical procedures on me," he continued, "including inserting a hair-like probe into my brain. Next morning I awoke back in my bed, feeling strangely disoriented. And there were unusual markings on my skin."

"It took me several days to remember the events of that night" Streiber confided. "But when the recollection became clear, I exploded with terror and utter disbelief."

It's right there on page 9—the lurid illustrations, the screaming headlines, the author shot which makes Whitley look very much like a neighbor who was recently arrested for child molestation and autocannibalism. Whitley told reporter Ken Potter of the thousands of people who have contacted him with similar experiences, and of the experts who have declared that Whitley isn't making up all of this.

Whitley asserts that he passed a lie-detector test administered by Ned Laurendi, president of the Society of Professional Investigators (oh, that Ned Laurendi!) and was also treated by a "medical hypnosis expert", Dr. Donald Klein, who concluded that the author wasn't "suffering from a psychosis" or hallucinating. Dr. Klein, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia University and director of research at New York State Psychiatric Institute, also stated that, "I see no evidence of an anxiety state, mood disorder or personality disorder."

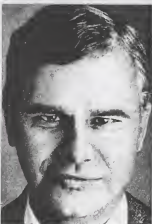
But we don't want to know if Whitley is feeling o.k. about himself—we want to know if Whitley is *lying* or not, don't we kids?

Raise your hands if you think Whitley Streiber was actually stolen from his bedroom and had bizarre experiments performed on him by aliens! Raise your hand if you believe that alien beings capable of traveling vast distances to this remote planet, beings that apparently have the ability and curiosity to find out what we're about, with billions of people to choose from, hundreds of thousands of whom would never be missed, how many of you really believe they'd eschew perfect physical specimens, great thinkers, world leaders and important scientists, and instead choose to do unspeakable things to Whitley Streiber, and that he *alone* would have the ability to

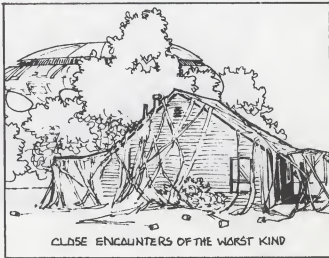
fight his terror and natural shyness and communicate this incredible event to the public?

Keep in mind this is a guy who makes his living making things up. Keep in mind that Whitley is now serving as executive producer for *Communion*, the movie. Keep in mind that in September, William Morrow (non-fiction) is releasing a sequel, *The Transformation*, in which Whitley continues the "startling and controversial description of alien contact". Keep in mind that Whitley is keeping all the money that he has made on hardback rights, paperback rights and film rights.

Now, raise your hands.



NOT STEVEN SPIELBERG



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND



Writers John Skipp and Craig Spector were recently flown to Los Angeles by the folks at Vestron to do a rewrite on the script for *Class of '99*, a sequel to *Class of '84*. Skipp called the rewrite a "ground-up" procedure and credited the gig to Clive Barker, who recommended them to the producers. While in L.A., the two made some appearances at area signings and were guests on KPFK radio's *Hour 25*, hosted by J. Michael Straczynski and Art Cover. Skipp and Spector joined writers Dave Schow and Richard Christian Matheson for a ninety-minute program on the horrors of horror writing.

Beauty and the Beast, CBS's hot fantasy series, nabbed Emmys for cinematography and musical composition; *Star Trek: The Next Generation* took statuettes for Costume Design, Makeup Achievement and Best Sound Editing. *Ghostbusters II* reunites Dan Ackroyd, Bill Murray and Harold Ramis as those intrepid slime collectors, under producer/director Ivan Reitman, filming in October.

INTRIGUING TITLES of upcoming films: *Mutant on the Bounty* from Canyon Filmworks; *The Dead Eat The Living*, from Mercer Productions; *Rockula*, from Cannon Films; *Monster High*, from Lightyear Enterprises; *My Mom's A Werewolf*, from Hairy Productions, and *S.P.O.O.K.S.*, from Spooks Productions.

ATTENTION RUPERT MURDOCH:

THOUGH SOME CRITICS ARE ACCUSING YOU OF trying to monopolize communications in this country and around the world, we don't believe it. Just because you own 20th Century Fox films, seven television stations, The Fox Network, dozens of metropolitan newspapers and over 20 magazines—including *Premiere*, *TV Guide* and the *Star*—we don't think there's any danger of your influencing public thinking, and we know you would never exploit your own magazines to advertise your struggling television shows. Never.

(P.S. Since you paid three billion dollars for Triangle Publications, *T.V. Guide's* parent company, we don't think you can turn your back on this offer: we know where you can pick up a nice Dark Fantasy magazine with name authors, an eager readership and a huge potential. The asking price is a measly million dollars—negotiable.)

HORRORFEST 89'

Although Jack Nicholson is not scheduled to appear, everything else about the upcoming Horrorfest '89 is sure to remind you of a madcap weekend at the Overlook. Ken Morgan, the twisted mind behind this gathering, wanted to provide a unique convention event for Stephen King fans. What else could he do but hold it at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado? Yes, that Stanley Hotel, the inspiration for King's *The Shining*. Horrorfest will have some of the trappings of normal conventions—hucksters room, panels, guest speakers, autograph sessions, videos and films—but the theme is Stephen King, and most of the guests will be authorities on, friends or fans of, Big Steve's. Scheduled to appear are Charles Grant, Douglas E. Winter, Michael Collings, Tyson Blue, Lisa Cantrell and others.

Will the big guy be there? Ken says, "I've invited him—we're not sure if his schedule will allow him to attend." But even so, there'll be drawings for first editions, a Friday night banquet at the Stanley, and (rumor has it) a surprise elevator party (heh heh heh).

Due to space limitations, reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis for the Stanley and the nearby Holiday Inn. Some dealer's room space is still available, as well as ad space in the program book. United Airlines is offering a discounted fare, but you *must* get that information from Horrorfest. If you ask United Airlines, they'll just say, "Huh?"

Write:

Horrorfest
P.O. Box 27652
Riverdale, Illinois, 60627-7652
Or call:
(312) 841-6300 * (800) 798-2489

Be sure to ask for the Horrorfest Desk.

This one sounds like a lot of fun, gang, so call now. But remember, we have dibs on room 217. — JESSIE HORSTING

CONS AND KUDOS/ KUDOS AND CONS

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE keeping score, the award season is upon us, though it now seems to last from January to December as nominations, final ballots and presentations of one genre-fiction award dovetails with another. Most of you are probably familiar with the Hugos, presented each year at the World Science Fiction Convention, the Nebulas, and those presented each year at the World Fantasy convention. Maybe you are also familiar with the Phillip K. Dick Award, the Prometheus Award, the John W. Campbell award, the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial award, the Balzogs, the Locus Award, the Science Fiction Chronicle award—you get the idea. Between the majors and the upstarts, if you haven't won an award yet, it's only because you haven't been published.

But there's a new award this year, and we think it's high time they had one—an award for horror. 1988 marks the first annual Bram Stoker Awards, presented by the Horror Writers of America in New York last June. HWA President Charles Grant semantically asserts these awards are not for the "best" of anything, but to reward significant achievement. Whatever the Stoker/Bram is for, HWA has gotten their act together and provided sponsorship and recognition to the form.

And the winners are, voted by HWA members:

Novel: *Swan Song*, by Robert McCammon. First Novel: *The Manse*, by Lisa W. Cantrell. Novelette: "The Pear-Shaped Man," by George R.R. Martin in a tie with "The Boy Who Came Back From the Dead," by Alan Rogers. Short Story: "The Deep End," by Robert McCammon. Non-fiction: *Mary Shelley*, by Muriel Spark. Collection: *The Essential Ellison*, by Harlan Ellison.

The only problem remaining for the HWA is whether to call the award the Bram or the Stoker. Although they seem to be trying to manipulate the media into using "The Bram," calling the award "The Stoker" seems more natural. Unfortunately, "stoker" is so close to "stroke"—well, for us, it was irresistible.

Dave Schow put it into words, and *Midnight Graffiti* is pleased to announce:

BLEED, the Biliious League of Eldrich Elders of Darkfantasy, is pleased to announce the presentation of the first annual "Stroker" awards for dubious achievement in the horror field. The trophies, Escher-like sculptures depicting one hand washing the other, will be presented in mid-December at a catered reception to be held in Manhattan's world-famous Port Authority terminal. Anyone who has a hundred bucks and who has lied, cajoled, bribed, brown-nosed, extorted, glad-handed, conned or otherwise respectably established themselves in the field is eligible to nominate. The categories are as follows:

BEST STEPHEN KING RIPOFF

(Books by King are also eligible)

THIS YEAR'S "NO STEPHEIN KING"

BEST WORK BY A DEAD WRITER

BEST UNPUBLISHED SHORT STORY

("But it's really a good one...")

BEST IGNORED CLASSIC

BEST DARK PENNYDREAD MAGIC
SPLATTER QUIET PSYCHO-SOCIO-PATHOLOGICAL HARDCORE METAREALIST NASTY PHANTASMOGIC SHUDDERPULP QUASIHORRIFIC BLOODBOOK GODDAM MONSTER SORTA STUFF



NOVEL THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A SHORT STORY

MOST TYPOS

STORY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED MOST BY TYPOS

NOVEL MOST WORTHY OF NOVELLIZATION

BEST STORY YOUR MOM COULD STILL READ

BEST HORROR BOOK OR STORY THAT ISN'T HORROR

HANS GIGER "ALIEN" AWARD FOR WORST ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

(If you accept it, it rips your heart out)

SPECIAL LIFETIME WEASELDICK TROPHY

Awarded to an individual demonstrating surpassing ability in the realms of in-fighting, gossip-mongering, clique-squabbling, slander and/or libel, and open envy of superior talent.

NOLACON II:

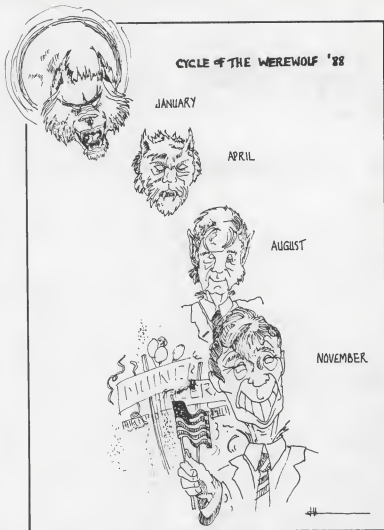
(The 46th Annual World Science Fiction Convention.)

NORMALLY, COVERAGE OF THE World Science Fiction Convention would properly belong in one of the genre's fine trade magazines, *Locus* or *Science Fiction Chronicle*, but unfortunately we were there. The 46th Worldcon, held over Labor Day weekend in New Orleans, definitely belongs in the horror category.

A Divide-and-Conquer strategy ruled the committee: rather than having a central location for the dealer's room, art room and panel rooms (a proven technique at successful cons), Nolacon's committee split the action between the Sheraton and the Marriot hotels, which face each other on busy, traffic-bloated Canal Street in downtown New Orleans. This situation wasn't necessarily deadly, and certainly saved the committee the price of renting the Riverside Convention Center down the street, but incoherent program guide, rainy weather, constant cancellations and rescheduling of events guaranteed total chaos.

A lovely city and the determination of fans to have a good time helped people to have an enjoyable weekend. The Hugos were presented Sunday night, and the winners are:

Best novel: *The Uplift War*, by David Brin. Best novella: "Eye For Eye," by Orson Scott Card. Best novelette: "Buffalo Gals Won't You Come Out Tonight," by Ursula K. LeGuin. Best Short Story: "Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers," by Lawrence Watt-Evans. Best Non-fiction: *Works of Wonder*, by Michael Whelan. Best Other Form: *Watchmen*, by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. Best Dramatic Presentation: *The Princess Bride*. Best Editor: Gardner Dozois (*Asimov's*). Best Pro Artist: Michael Whelan. Best Semiprozine: *Locus*. Best Fanzine: *The Texas SF Inquirer*. Best Fan Artist: Brad Foster. Best Fan Writer: Mike Glycer. A special Award was given to the SF Oral History Association and a Big Heart award was presented to Andre Norton. The John W. Campbell award was presented to Judith Moffett.



BEST NOVEL

HEADLINES

YOU MAY
HAVE MISSED

BY RUSS BUCHANAN

ANIMAL STORIES

STRANGE GOINGS ON IN Los Angeles

A T T E N T I O N :
Devil Worshipers, Voodoo People, Santeria Devotees and Druids. It is a violation to engage in any and all of the following practices with animals:

DECAPITATION

DISEMBOWELING

BLEEDING (for drinking)

FOOT, PAW or HOOF CHOPPING

ANY METHOD of SACRIFICE

Violators subject to six months in jail and/or \$1,000 fine.

L.A. P.C. 47924.666

If animal rights activists have their way, Los Angelenos may soon see warnings like this posted around town.

Lately, L.A. cops and animal control officers have been stumbling on some pretty gruesome scenes. "Animals are being turned up by animal control agencies with severed heads, severed feet, surgeon-like cuts in the abdominal area," said Lt. Charles Reed, investigations supervisor for the Los Angeles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Why?

Religion! What else?

As Los Angeles' Hispanic population has increased, so has the practice of Santeria, a hybrid of Voodoo and Roman Catholicism. It is a secretive religion which, among other bizarre and colorful rituals, sacrifices and mutilates animals. For instance, in a "cleansing" ritual, the *Santero* decapitates a chicken, drains its blood on an unclean disciple, then wipes the blood off with the feathered body of the anemic chicken. Presto! Clean disciple. Lambs, goats and doves get pretty much the same treatment.

Once practiced widely in Cuba, Haiti and Brazil, Santeria is now practiced

widely in Hollywood, Anaheim, and Malibu, and the A.S.P.C.A. does not like it.

Strangely, L.A.'s Board of Animal Regulation is now considering a proposal to ban such activities.

TALL, COLD AND HANDSOME

WHAT STANDS SEVEN FEET TALL but doesn't play basketball? has only three fingers on each hand but isn't a non-union factory worker? is slimy but doesn't even know Ed Mcese?

Lizard Man!

Christopher Davis, a seventeen-year-old from Browntown, South Carolina, was changing a tire late at night in nearby Scape Ore Swamp when, he swears, he was attacked by the Lizard Man.

Tom and Mary Wayne reported that a "huge thing with red eyes" mangled their car then lumbered back into the swamp.

Reports of Lizard Man sightings have been pouring into Sheriff Liston Truesdale's office incessantly and Brown-townians are getting downright nervous. "These aren't crackpots, they're reputable people," said Truesdale. "They claim to actually have seen this critter."

State biologist Matt Knox, who has been called in to help investigate the sightings, isn't buying any of this *Iguanus Erectus* noise. With the unerring and precise logic of a true bureaucrat, Knox believes that this seven-foot, six-fingered, phosphorescent-eyed car mangler is probably a "red fox or a muddy drunk."

Red fox or reptilian man-sloth from Venus, one thing is certain: Browntown and its swamp are now famous. Rubber-necks and television crews have overrun the area hoping to catch a glimpse of Lizard Man, and a Columbia radio station is offering a one-million-dollar reward for its capture.



NOT A RED FOX?

KANSAS KOW KING K.O.S. KOMEDY KOMPANY

ZARDA, COW FROM HELL.

The title alone sends shivers down the spine as one's brain imagines the worst...

Late one stormy night you go to the barn to check on a prize Jersey that ain't been actin' right. As you near the barn, you can hear her lowing. Funny kinda mooin', though, sounds more like an Angus. Something in your gut tells you not to, but you open the barn door. A freezing blast of cow-pie air hits your face as the door slams shut behind you. There she is, writhing in her stall. On her back, four legs stretching painfully toward the heavens, her horns clicking a crazy rhythm over her impossibly spinning head. You want to run but NO! Nearer, closer, she pulls you. As you kneel down next to the terrified Blue Ribbon winner, an ocean of green cud envelops your head. You use your shirt to wipe the satan-sauce from your eyes—then you see it. On her painfully engorged udder, just below the left row of teats, a message, a cry, spelled out in letters of fur, scabs and tortured hide...

"MILK ME."

The good news: there will be a possessed bovine coming to a theater near you.

The bad news: its name will not be Zarda.

Members of the Duck's Breath Mystery Theater were trying to come up with a title for their new horror-spoof movie. "We wanted something that would conjure up memories of those old Japanese



horror-sci-fi flicks," said Scott Smith, the movie's executive producer. They decided upon "Zarda, Cow From Hell."

Imagine their surprise when director Robert C. Hughes, a native of Kansas City, Kansas, informed Smith and the Duck's Breath boys that there actually is a Zarda Dairy in his home town.

"We contacted Ben Zarda in Kansas and he let us know that he would rather that we not use the name 'Zarda' in reference to a demonic cow," said Smith. "So we're kinda kickin' around new ideas."

FISTS OF FURRY

PICTURE THIS GRIM SCENE:

You're driving home from work when a bunch of screaming, snarling monkeys climb all over your car, madly trying to get to you by smashing the windows with their little hairy fists, determined to lick your bones clean after doing unspeakable monkey-things to your body—an act of vein-popping, eye-eating, bile-lapping revenge.

According to a recent UPI item, an

unidentified man from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, accidentally ran over and killed a monkey on his way to work. Other monkeys standing nearby ran after the man's car but were unable to catch the fleeing death-mobile.

On his way back home, however, the little bushwhackers were waiting for him. When they spotted his car, they jumped on it and pounded the roof and windows. As the man sped off, he saw the grieving monkey troop dragging their fallen colleague into the nearby mountains...

DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME

THIS HAS BEEN A ROLLER-coaster year for both sides of the hand-gun control issue.

First, the Maryland legislature banned cheap hand guns (Saturday night specials) in a landmark piece of law that inspired spontaneous orgasm in gun-control proponents, and mass *grande mal* seizures in the "from my cold, dead fingers" folks.

Then, in a cruel twist, fate conspired with two incidents which may set the gun-control movement back twenty years.

In an act of sheer hypocrisy, syndicated columnist and gun-control champion Carl T. Rowan shot and wounded an intruder who was taking an unauthorized dip in the swimming pool of Rowan's Washington D.C. home. The handgun used by Rowan was unregistered. Needless to say, the National Rifle Association and its allies (gun manufacturers, survivalists, subscribers to *Soldier of Fortune*, et al.) had a field day.

The second blow was dealt by a nineteen-year-old man in an act that can only be described as incredible.

In an article recently published in *Physician's Weekly*, Vancouver psychiatrist Leslie Solyom tells this intriguing tale of "George," an obsessive-compulsive under Solyom's care.

George, a pathetic young man, spent most of his adolescence enslaved by his compulsive fear of germs. He would wash his hands and shower literally hundreds of times a day. His phobia forced him to drop out of high school and made holding a job impossible. One day George complained to his mother that his life was so wretched that he would rather die. George's mother suggested that he go shoot himself. "Parents of obsessive-compulsives often have cruel streaks," notes Dr. Solyom. Taking her advice, George went down to the basement, put the barrel of a .22 rifle in his mouth, squeezed the trigger, and BLAM!

He was cured.

During the bullet's journey through George's head it managed to excise the part of the brain that was causing his mania.

All other functions were unharmed.

George, after a short period of convalescence, was able to complete high school and is now in his second year of college.

One shudders to think of the public-relations possibilities for the N.R.A.

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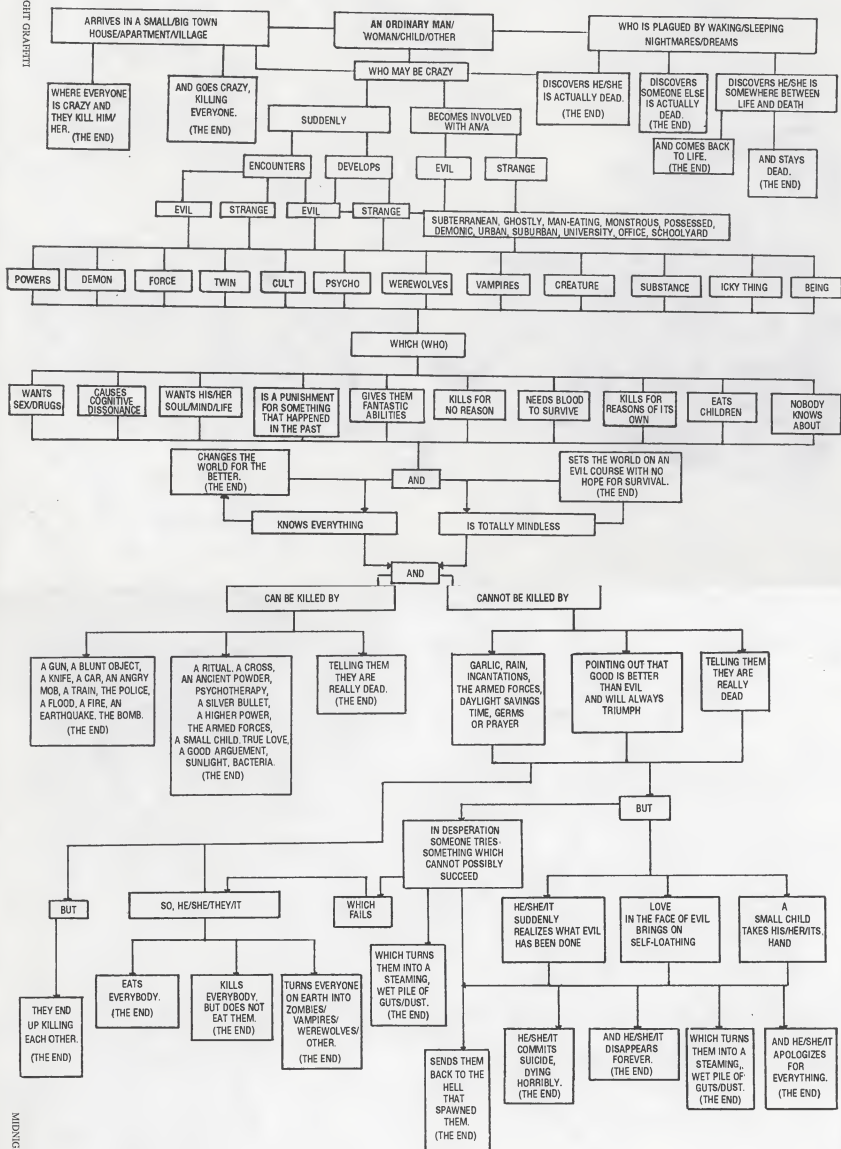
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MIDNIGHT GRAFTING:





by
Steven R.
Boyett

LEUTENANT RHINO LOVES HIS F-18

After thousands of hours nestled in its warm and pressurized cockpit, the Hornet is as responsive to the commands of Lieutenant Rhino's brain as his hands. He enjoys the power at his fingertips and beneath his hard-toiled boots. He can make the horizon pinwheel with the slightest turn of gloved wrist. A push will fill the wedge of windshield with the monotony of sea or confusion of land. A pull, and the horizon drains in an even line.

A finger on this button, and the load would lighten beneath his wings, to explode somewhere and someone ahead of him.

Lieutenant Rhino smiles, sliding his rubber cup of oxygen mask a half-inch up his nose. On his nose is the wart that gives Rhino his nickname; the wart that all the kids made fun of in school, the only wart on his body, and in the most conspicuous place possible, the wart he absolutely refused to have removed.

His oxygen mask irritates the wart.

Rhino thinks about the payload specialists on bombers.

They have time to *place*, to add some style to their button-pushing. A bombardier—payload specialist—can arc out his hand, add a flourish, extend an index finger, and *push*. Or he can jab like a concert pianist attacking ivory, then wait for the

welling of megaton timpani. Or simple and direct, the Air Force Way. Or better still, simple, direct and with little finger.

Rhino envies them this time to plan. Fighter-pilot decisions don't allow much planning—in fact, they're hardly conscious decisions at all. Rhino feels he is the perfect man for his job.

He glances right, looking out the Windex-clean window at Kneecap, the 747 with the Presidential Seal.

THERE ARE CAMPFIRES ALL OVER OZ TONIGHT.

Gillikins from the north, Quadlings from the south, Munchkins from the east, and Winkies from the west, all flock toward the Emerald City, taking care that their torches, lighted ceremoniously in their home cities, remain burning. They wish to add to the bonfire already blazing in celebration of the imminent return of Dorothy.

The first delegation of Munchkins arrives at the end of the Yellow Brick Road. They are greeted with glee by the revellers, who are becoming a little drunk from the flow of Winkie Country wine.

Wine leaves no hangover in Oz.

The Munchkins bow their short little bows and with great pomp add their torches to the bonfire. The Scarecrow thanks them solemnly from his gilded platform, which is located a respectful distance from the flames.

LIEUTENANT RHINO SNAKES A GLOVED FINGER

beneath the damnable oxygen mask to scratch at the wart. He wonders—not for the first time, certainly—if he can get one of the masks custom-built, with a rubber dot of a hump for his nose.

Kneecap plods along in its clumsy-graceful way, like a pregnant guppy swimming upside down. "Kneecap" is for NEACP, which is for National Emergency Airborne Command Post.

Rhino frowns, and his oxygen mask lowers snugly where it belongs. Looking at the bulbous-headed airplane, he has just been struck by the notion that the craft looks remarkably like a winged penis. He squashes the thought and glances ahead of the 747. There flies Tee Dee One, the point plane in the Tasmanian Devil Group, spewing a gray contrail. Tasmanian Devil Group is the hastily assembled escort of F-18s flying in a diamond configuration, no perfect Euclid would have had an orgasm. In the center of the diamond flies Kneecap, and inside Kneecap sits the President of the ephemerally United States.

In the mid-1970s it had been decreed that, when the Balloon finally went up, so would the President—hence Kneecap. Several hours ago the United States had been alerted, picking up at the escalating situation in the Persian Gulf had politely informed those who get informed that the Balloon was up as a Pittsburgh Steeler before the Superbowl and so, up went Kneecap.

A voice crackles in Lieutenant Rhino's ear. The voice is Kneecap. "Kneecap to Tasmanian Devils. Deploying antennae

The air drag'll slow us up a bit, so stay with us. Tee Dee Three will want to climb a hundred feet. Acknowledge."

Tee Dees One and Two acknowledge. Tee Dee Three adds that he is climbing, since he is flying behind Kneecap and wants no part of the long antenna that is deployed to collect vital information.

Rhino thumbs his radio transmitter. "Tee Dee Four acknowledges. Do we have an ETA Goldilocks?"

Goldilocks was SAC—Strategic Air Command—headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska; ETA was Estimated Time of Arrival. It was fun to think up names to go with important things.

"We can't give that on the air, Tee Dee Four," answers Kneecap smugly. "It shouldn't be too hard to work out yourself. Keep this channel clear. Kneecap out."

Well! Rhino toys with the idea of peeling off and shoving a bang or six under Kneecap's nose, but dismisses it. If he does and is somehow caught after this mess is over, he will be court-martialed.

THE TIN WOODMAN SWIMS THE LENGTH OF HIS

Olympic-sized pool, breast-stroking his hollow body through the Quaker State forty-weight. He emerges, dripping viscously, and bends his legs and flexes his arms to work the oil into his knees and elbows. A bespectacled assistant hands him the evening edition of the *Green Street Journal*: he turns immediately to Commodities.

Hearing himself scrape as he sits on a stone bench, he thinks, *I ought to do something about that. A little foam padding, perhaps.*

He opens his chest and pulls out his heart. Nine twenty-five already. The revelry will go on for another two and a half hours—until Glinda made everybody go to bed.

Being one of the Good Guys sure has its drawbacks, he reflects. But it's probably for the best, since Dorothy arrives tomorrow.

Dorothy...

He looks down and, for the ten thousandth time, curses his incompleteness. "If I only had a hard," he sighs.

"TEE DEE ONE." THE VOICE OF KNEECAP crackles to life, calling the F-18 Hornet leading the diamond formation—

"One here."

"We show activity on long-range. DSB confirms. Speed and signature suggest Soviet cruise missile, type unknown, target Goldilocks Reliable." Kneecap gives coordinates and velocities, then adds a command that Lieutenant Rhino yearns to hear directed to him: "Go for it, Tee Dee One."

The trail starting from Tee Dee One's tail darkens as the F-18 shoots ahead and veers southwest on an intercept course. *How come I never have any fun?* Lieutenant Rhino whines to himself.

S T E V E B O Y E T T

THE ONCE-COWARDLY LION, KING OF BEASTS, ignores the big-breasted woman plaiting his calves as he searches through the matted fur of his emaciated arm. He finds a healthy vein and grins carnivorously. He wraps his tail tightly around his elbow and enleches his fist several times, then slips the needle of a hypodermic syringe into the vein and pushes the plunger.

Euphoria courses up his arm and throughout his undernourished body. *Courage*, he thinks.

The woman gives up plaiting his legs and sits on the polished floor giggling to herself.

The Lion folds his paws behind his head and feels himself beginning to float above the couch. He stares contentedly at the emerald ceiling and thinks of the revellers outside the city wall. *Whatta they got that I ain't got?*

BRIGHTNESS BLOSSOMS IN THE SOUTHWEST, where Tee Dee One veered off for his rendezvous with destiny. The three Tasmanian Devils still escorting Kneecap remain in tight formation until Tee Dee One is sighted, first on radar, then visually. The phrase "visual sighting" is not redundant to a fighter pilot.

The returning fighter-jet banks, and Rhino sees that it has expended only two air-to-air missiles. Tee Dee One resumes formation, and the Tasmanian Devils are a diamond once again. He is back in lead position and reporting before the shock-wave reaches them.

Smug-ass bastard, thinks Rhino. Still, he thumbs the "transmit" button and joins the others in congratulating Tee Dee One.

Ninety minutes later Kneecap touches down at SAC headquarters. The four escort jets shoot ahead, fifty feet from the tarmac, then peel off in four directions.

Flight crews glide out to Kneecap on maintenance trucks, sticking long hoses into its delicate underparts.

The President and his staff, including an officer carrying a Little Black Bag known as the Football which contains the codes for launching U.S. nuclear forces, hurry down the roll-up stairway and are quickly bundled away in a van that hurries them to another airplane: Looking Glass, commanded by an Air Force general in charge of directing U.S. ICBMs and bombers.

Fifteen minutes later Kneecap is airborne again, heading north. Looking Glass noses into the air soon afterward, gains a respectful height, and turns south, toward Kansas.

THE WICKED WITCH OF THE NORTH CACKLES gleefully. "Melt my sister, will she?" Her voice is a silken ssslliding across a sheen of oil. "Start a housing development on my other sister, will she?"

Perched beside her, the King of the Flying Monkeys cocks his capped head. He removes the soggy stump of a Cuba Libre cigar from his mouth and gestures with it. "Dat housing development," he says in a distinct Bronx accent, "is the best thing ever happened to us."

MANY ITEMS WERE SALVAGED FROM THE unintentionally mobile home of Dorothy's Aunt Em and Uncle Henry. In a wire magazine rack next to the flush toilet were Aunt Em's back issues of *Collier's* and *Vanity Fair*, and a Sears & Roebuck catalog (minus the first thirty pages) advertising such novel items as hunting supplies, washing machines, door locks, and shoe lifts for the short statured. A supplement detailed Sear & Roebuck's generous Credit Plan. On a narrow vanity shelf beneath the medicine-chest mirror were Coty cosmetics, including a cake of rouge in a cameo box with a cracked, ivory-handled, horsetail brush, a thick glass jar of vanishing cream, and lipsticks in various reds. On the scarred maple dresser were books—among them the 1898 edition of the *Home Medical Encyclopaedia* (with a comprehensive listing of drugs, their effects, and methods of administration), *Hobbs' Guide to the Stock Exchange*, *Smythe's Guide to Investments and Agrarian Commodities*, and *The Shooter's Bible* (with a chapter on home loads). Beneath the books, in the top dresser drawer, were a box of Lucifer matches, a package of Diamond rolling papers, and Union Leader tobacco in the Crimson Couch package. Scattered about were fifty-five cents in change and a rumpled dollar bill (which solved the mystery of the hitherto unknown word "dollar" that occurred with such frequency in the Sears & Roebuck catalogue, in the back of Aunt Em's magazines, and in the Hobbs and Smythe books). There was also a box of Cuba Libre cigars hand-wrapped in Havana, and beneath this were twelve worn-cornered, black-and-white French postcards, most of them thumb-worn at the lower left edge. In the drawer below this were bras, panties and elastic girdles.

In the utility room was a gasoline-powered generator. In the living room was a cathedral-arched Philco radio. Discovered beneath a loose board in the larger bedroom were two unlabeled glass jugs of illegally distilled grain alcohol, colloquially known as "hooch."

The house had been picked clean in days.

THE KING OF THE FLYING MONKEYS WAVES HIS fragrant cigar. "Best thing that ever happened," he repeats.

The Wicked Witch of the North slits her green eyes at the King of the Flying Monkeys. "The best is yet to come," she grates. She smiles, and the King of the Flying Monkeys finds he must look away.

The Wicked Witch of the North gazes back into her crystal ball.

In it are a river and a rocket.

HELD ALOFT BY ITS SHORT, STUBBY WINGS, THE Soviet cruise missile amorously hugs the terrain. It is a submarine-launched missile that has come all the way across the Western United States, zooming along a scant hundred feet from the ground. Being launched from a submarine means that it has escaped detection by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System radars in Alaska, and if the Defense Support Program



S T E V E B O Y E T T

satellites haven't detected it by now, there is little that can be done about it if they do.

Traveling across the continent, its Terrain Contour Matching capability (guided by a preprogrammed minicomputer that uses a radar altimeter to match the contour of the ground with on-board maps obtained from spy-satellite photographs) pilots the cruise missile swiftly toward its programmed destination.

With simple-minded determination it follows the twisting path of the Missouri River, avoiding radar detection, until its pea-brain tells it that it is time to turn now.

The missile veers southwest, whistling to itself as it carries its 300-kiloton nuclear warhead toward Omaha, Nebraska.

WHAT WOULD PASS FOR THE SOUND OF A DC-10 crash elsewhere is laughter in the castle of the Wicked Witch of the North. Her Tartar-like guards are used to the sound and do not flinch, but the Flying Monkeys are not, and they cover their enormous ears.

The Wicked Witch of the North turns away from her crystal ball and fixes her Evil-Eyed gaze on the King of the Flying Monkeys. "Bring me my broom!" she screeches. Her voice is a thousand jagged fingernails dragged across two hundred spotless blackboards.

The awful sound raises the fur of his neck, and the King of the Flying Monkeys turns to obey.

"And make sure it's full this time!" she calls after him. "I don't want to run out of smoke the way I did before!"

She rubs her long-fingered, black-nailed green hands and turns back to the lovely prime-time viewing on the crystal ball.

In it are blackness and stars.

ORBITING HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, A SOVIET satellite receives a coded radio signal.

The satellite—with a microchip brain even smaller than that of the Soviet cruise missile—sets in motion the short program that has waited years for this moment.

Four small explosive bolts blow away its small metal shell to expose the warhead beneath. A thick, ceramic heat-shield covers its nose; it will be sheared away by friction, and the remainder discarded, during the warhead's descent.

Gyroscopes whir soundlessly in the vacuum of space. The bulbous-headed body pivots until its single cone of rocket exhaust points away from the delicate blue marble of the earth. The engine flares for seventeen seconds, and the pea-brained missile begins its seventy-two-second descent toward Omaha, Nebraska.

GOD TAKES A FLASH PICTURE RIGHT BEHIND

Lieutenant Rhino's F-18.

"What the fuck was that?"

"Cut it, Tee Dee Four," orders the Voice of Looking Glass.

Up yours, Rhino commands silently.

"That," says a radio voice, "was Omaha." Rhino notes the use of the past tense.

"Cut it, Tee Dee Three," orders Looking Glass.

Tee Dee Three, muses Rhino. Golly gee, Tee Dee Three, see the bee?

The overpressure wave hits them from behind. The five jets nose up and ride it out nicely. Rhino hangs ten all the way.

WHY CAN'T THEY BREAK PIÑATAS, OR HOLD A parade, or anything else in the goddamned world? the Scarecrow wonders. But no, they've got to light the biggest damned fire they can make, and I have to preside over it.

If the wind changes I'm going to go up like a firework. The King of Ahhs.

The Scarecrow bows to a party of Good Witches-in-Training from the South-southeast. They blush behind thick layers of rouge, duck their heads, and smile shyly with reddened lips. With charming sophomoricism they recite spells to light the brands they contribute to the bonfire's blaze. Straightening, the Scarecrow fixes his painted eyes on the white-taffeta-gowned butt of one of the Good Witches.

One of the prudish Munchkins catches him staring at the Good Witch's butt. The Scarecrow stares him down until he turns away, red-faced and muttering apologies.

Short little fuck.

He looks back at the white-clad derriere.

Maybe I shouldn't have asked for brains.

BY LIEUTENANT RHINO'S RECKONING—AS DEAD a reckoning as ever there was—they have just crossed over into Kansas airspace.

What are they doing down there? he wonders, looking out at vast stretches of farmland. Hiding?

Shooting each other to get into air-raid shelters, probably. There's a missile silo for every cow, 'round here.

What would they think if they knew we were up here?

Be pissed off, he decides. Hell, they paid for this. Their money went to build Kneecap and Looking Glass. Somebody picked beans for weeks to pay for the radiation-shielded fuselage. Someone else, some skinny redneck riding a tractor from sunup to sundown, got hemorrhoids plowing from January to the middle of March to contribute to the long-range radar, the teletype printers, the mile-long reel-out antenna.

Hey, down there! he sends telepathically, waving. Thanks! You guys paid for my F-18!

He tips his wings in salute.

THE WICKED WITCH OF THE NORTH TAKES to the air on her broom, which leaves a much blacker trail than even the most flatulent of the F-18s. She doesn't need to understand overpressure waves and aftershocks, dynamic

S T E V E B O Y E T T

pressure and "dirty" bursts and gamma radiation, to know that she will be safer in the air. She doubts even her castle will survive the coming onslaught, and her castle is about as tough as a castle as a contractor can build.

Besides, she'll need to be in the air to open the Rainbow Bridge.

She orders all her flying monkeys to take off with her, and they flap around her, shrieking delightedly. It's been a while since the old hag let them cut some air.

She checks her skywriting smoke level. The dipstick shows full. Not that she doesn't trust the King of the Flying Monkeys, but you never know. Good help is pretty hard to find in Oz these days.

"AWACS SHOWS A BOGEY," ANNOUNCES THE electronically dehumanized Voice of Looking Glass.

"Numbers?" Tee Dee One demands quickly, knowing that Looking Glass is talking about an unidentified flying aircraft and not about a film star dead of cancer.

Looking Glass gives Tee Dee some numbers. The numbers tell him the bogey is 'way up high and dropping fast.

Glory hog, thinks Lieutenant Rhino.

"Tee Dee Four," says Tee Dee One.

Rhino jumps. "Four here."

"Go for it, Tee Dee Four. Short and sweet."

Rhino grins. He guns his engines, rises smartly, and shoots ahead of the Tasmanian Devil formation, pulling back hard on the stick. His contrail darkens behind him.

"BEEP-BEEP," SAYS THE F-18'S RADAR.

Rhino glances at it. A tight-packed group of phosphorescent green-white tactical numbers creeps toward a bull's-eye on the screen. Rhino relies on his computers; the bogey is too fast to visually sight—by the time he saw it, it would be long gone.

It looks like there's one whopper of a storm about forty miles to the south. Tornado, maybe. Clouds cover the land like puffy gray fungus.

"Beep-beep," repeats the radar.

"I know it's there!" Rhino snaps.

Fifteen seconds later his targeting computer has a radar lock and tells him he can fire. Rhino's F-18 carries a special missile, an ASAT—Anti-Satellite—with the barest smidgen of a nuclear tip to wipe out enemy satellites. But this bogey has managed to snipe right by everybody until almost too late to do anything about it, and Rhino is not sure that his ASAT could maneuver, target-lock, and detonate in time to take care of the satellite-launched missile. If it is an airburst warhead, it will go off at approximately two thousand feet. But since the bomb that shifted Omaha into the past tense was an air burst, this one will probably be a ground-pounder intended to further pulverize Strategic Air Command Headquarters and get whoever may have cheated by hiding in underground shelters.

THE PEA-BRAIN OF THE DESCENDING MISSILE, however, is just smart enough to know that it should try to get out of the way if it detects someone trying to stop it. Since it is moving so fast, it can't maneuver so well, but since it is moving so fast, even the slightest move will make it harder to intercept.

RHINO FROWNS AT THE SHIFTING NUMBER

group on his tactical display. The missile must have seen him coming, because it is running away.

Rhino runs after it.

In what seems like no time they are over the fungus of the storm. The storm is capped by a huge rainbow, and Rhino thinks of McDonalds.

The rainbow draws closer as the Soviet missile speeds down and the F-18 speeds up and across the sky. Lieutenant Rhino's tactical radar is beeping bloody murder now.

Oh, what the hey, thinks Rhino. "Bang," he says out loud. "Bang-bang."

The F-18's Voice Activated Weapons Launcher System hears the words. It asks itself if they are the right words. It asks itself if Rhino is allowed to say them.

Yes, it answers itself. And yes.

Satisfied, it throws out a heat-seeking missile. This missile has a "conventional" warhead, meaning that it is not nuclear, but uses the kind of explosive traditional bombers recommend most.

The voice-activated, heat-seeking missile misses, however, and for the strangest of reasons: the satellite-launched Soviet missile dives over the rainbow and disappears.

Targetless, the heat-seeking missile speeds under the rainbow. Lieutenant Rhino and his F-18 sail over it.

"THERE SHE IS!" SOMEBODY POINTS UPWARD.

The Scarecrow looks at the indicated patch of night sky and sees nothing unusual. But he keeps his gaze fixed unblinkingly and, sure enough, one of the stars is moving. It seems to be coming closer, growing brighter as it does.

"Dorothy!" shouts one of the Good Witches in Training from the South-southeast. The one with the nice butt.

"Dorothy isn't due till tomorrow," says the Scarecrow. But the cry has been taken up: "Dorothy!" shout the Munchkins. "Dorothy!" shout the Good Witches. "Dorothy!" shout the Gillikins, Quaddlings and Winkies.

"Might be the Wicked Witch of the North," mutters the Scarecrow, wishing he weren't so damned smart.

SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG.

It hits Rhino as his F-18 sails over the rainbow without a ripple: *You can't* get close to a rainbow. They're a phenomenon of refracted sunlight, and must keep pace ahead of you because the angle of refraction must remain constant to the observer in order for the rainbow to be visible at all!

And besides, he remembers, rainbows are *circular* when viewed from the air.

S T E V E B O Y E T T

AHEAD OF RHINO, THE SOVIET MISSILE IS EVEN more confused. Nothing matches the contour signatures contained in its pea brain. The altimeter shows a drastic reduction in height.

Desperate, it switches to infrared tracking and discovers a heat source only a few miles below. It makes a minor course correction and sighs an electronic sigh of relief and fulfillment.

RHINO SEES STARS THROUGH HIS WEDGE OF windshield. But it can't be night yet! Something is really fucked here.

He follows the missile down through puffy, moonlit clouds that he knows should be puffy gray fungus. He breaks through them just in time to glimpse a brilliant flash ahead of the plummeting nose of his F-18.

Rhino jinks left, kicks in the afterburners, and pulls up, feeling blood drain from his head. His vision dims even though his flight suit tries to fight the G-forces by squeezing his body like a concerned nother.

Just before the flash he glimpsed something he is not about to believe. There is no way he can believe it, no way it can exist, even though his mother read him to sleep describing it when he was a little boy with a big wart on his nose; even though it is exactly what he pictured but never bothered to credit with any importance, any weight, any relevance, to his life, his dreams, his heart's desire.

But inside he knows that he really did see it before he'd begun to pull up from the dive, and he knows that, somehow, he's not in Kansas anymore.

Aftershocks buffet his F-18.

And the Emerald City, the slender spires and fragile domes and jewelled gates; the capital of Oz and host to her miraeles; the green flint that sparked the imagination of generations; the Emerald City, where the impossible is as ordinary as a Sunday paper beside a china plate of steaming scrambled eggs; the brilliant, delicate, and eternal Emerald City of Oz, shatters under an explosion beyond the mind's containing—fifty times more

powerful than that which destroyed Hiroshima, an explosion equal to the simultaneous detonation of one million tons of TNT. But before those pieces of emerald, shaped by small hands and large thoughts, can fall a measurable distance, they are melted to slag by a flash of consuming, voracious heat—ten million degrees Fahrenheit, heat that fuses sand into glass, heat like the surface of the sun.

Seeing the flash, the Tin Woodman extends a metal arm to grab his famous axe and defend his beloved city, but his arm shimmers, glows, and melts in a fraction of a second. Within his melting chest his heart bursts into flame, as if unable to contain its rage.

The Once-Cowardly Lion, hearing a jungle bellow from somewhere outside his chambers deep within the Emerald City, draws a proud breastful of air to respond the the challenge, but no amount of courage could withstand the onslaught that devours him as unthinkingly as a whale devours a plankton cell.

And the Scarecrow, Ruler of the Emerald City and wisest creature in all of Oz; whose greatest fear and enemy is fire, sees all the flames of Creation born before his painted eyes, and has only enough time to rail against the brain that could conceive a device that obliterates minds on a wholesale level, before he ignites and bursts and becomes ash and less than ash, not even a flicker in the terrible conflagration that is his city, not even a tenth of a second's worth of fuel to feed the clenched fist of consumed matter that towers above the heart of the Land of Oz.

Yellow bricks burn. Poppy fields vaporize. Round houses explode. The bodies of Munchkins catch fire by themselves. Good Witches run screaming, white taffeta blazing; are smashed by a compressed wall of air moving faster than the speed of sound—the overpressure wave; are pieked up and hurled like so many clots of dirt; are flensed by debris; are slammed into walls and trees or tumbled like broken dolls upon the ground, twisted and bleeding, powerless to help themselves or their burned and blackened and blinded and bleeding countrymen. Everyone is a child again, pleading for help, calling to make it stop, make it go away, but their cries are subsumed by the howl of the wind.

Firestorms feed on the kindling of smashed houses. Those Munchkins, Gillikins, Winkies and Quadlings who have



STEVE BOYETT

managed to hide in cellars are asphyxiated by the voracious greed of fire sucking away the air.

The roiling fist swells above the heart of Oz. It unclenches, and leaves not one life untouched by its fingers.

FLYING FAR AWAY—GLOATING, UNAWARE that the malevolent life within her body ebbs as those billions of body cells destroyed by an onslaught of neutrons and gamma rays encourage the death of surrounding cells—the Wicked Witch of the North straddles her broom and writes triumphantly in the sky.

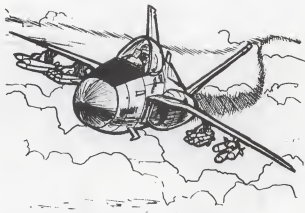
She has not even completed the first word before she is shot down by a jet fighter.

THE NEXT MORNING A HOUSE LANDED IN THE middle of a smoking, thousand-foot-wide crater, and Dorothy Gale stepped right from her snaggle-toothed front porch and onto a vast plain of fused emerald and glass. She cradled Toto in one arm and her ungainly lunch pail in the other. Her ruby-slipped feet clacked across a solid sea of green until she stopped before a wall—a lone wall of emerald brick, the only wall standing for a dozen miles.

A hot wind blew among the ruins. Black flakes settled like filthy snow upon Dorothy's gingham-clad shoulders. A lengthening white contrail stretched across the murky sky.

But this can't be Oz, thought Dorothy. This just can't be.

And so she walked away from the plain of emerald, letting Toto pick his own way through piles of rubble the height of buildings—the rubble of townships and yellow brick roads and talking trees and tall cornfields and horses of a different color—a little girl with braided pigtails wandering the perpetually twilight corpse of a city she dreamed about every night at her aunt and uncle's farm in Kansas. For mile after mile she saw not one living creature, not one standing building. In a few hours she stumbled upon life: a wasteland of leveled houses writhing with groping, burned figures in charred uniforms of red, yellow, blue



or green. Knowing nothing of fallout, blinded by nuclear flash, deafened by detonation, the People of Oz staggered in private blackness and agony though the soft and deadly rain, calling out to cars that could not hear.

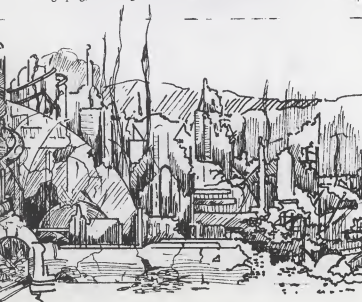
Dorothy cupped her hand to the river that fed Lake Quad and drank radioactive water. Fish floated belly-up. Dorothy looked up from her small, wet palm and saw shadows on a stone wall in the remains of a Munchkin village, but there were no figures to cast them. She recognized the Mayor of Munchkinland from his curled-brim hat and spike goatee. The shadow held a scroll in one hand and gestured to the crowd with the other, burned forever onto the stone.

She chased away rats that fed on the festering corpses of Munchkins, two sources of the plague to come, and walked on.

In one day Dorothy saw more burn victims that there are burn-unit beds in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The burned and unburned alike were afflicted with radiation sickness: vomiting, diarrhea, anemia, hair loss, skin cancers and infections. There was not one hospital in all of Oz.

The land was growing cold because the airborne debris blocked the sunlight. In a few months the fifteen thousand survivors of Oz—which once boasted a population one hundred thousand strong—will face the first true winter of their lives. Farmers will watch withering crops that signify the doom of their families. In the land of the Winkies, opposite the easterly wind, surviving cows and goats will give forth radioactive milk; the last normal infants born in Oz will suck at the breasts of mothers eating radioactive food and breathing radioactive air. Only half of the fifteen thousand will see the next summer.

DOROTHY WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE THIS GRIM winter. Within days of her arrival she is dead. Massive radiation poisoning sleeting through her body disrupted its cells beyond repair, forcing her metabolism to work itself to exhaustion, until it simply gives up. She lies against a pile of rubble besides a puddle of her own vomit, lunch pail in hand, a widow's shawl of radioactive ash around her shoulders, small



bodies huddled beside her, still forever.

Toto, too.

I'VE GOT TO GET BACK, LIEUTENANT RHINO

thinks frantically. *I've got to tell them they can't do this, not this.*

Rhino has logged more than a thousand hours in fighter jets. His F-18 fits his body like a tailored suit, and he knows its every tic and tremor. He does not need to look at the gauge to know that he is nearly out of fuel.

But I've got at least an hour left, he thinks. I've got to find it, got to check my course tracker and tactical radar and inertial navigator and trust my dead reckoning to get me back to that rainbow, to get me over that rainbow and back home. To tell them, to make them stop. If he could tell them what they'd done, if they could only see what he had seen, surely they'd understand.

He shuts his eyes and remembers what he saw just before pulling his F-18 up and out.

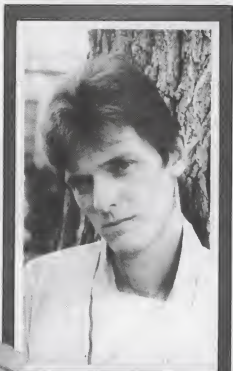
It was tall. God, it was so tall and slender...

Got to get back and get on the radio. If I do one thing, God, one useful thing in my entire life, let me find that rainbow, let me make it back before I run out of fuel. You gave me the speed and the skill and the talent to let me fly like a bluebird, God. Now let me use that skill to find my way back and tell them what I've seen, what we've done.

—slender like the fingers of a lady. And it sparkled like the ocean in the moonlight...

Thirty minutes. I can find it in thirty minutes, God.

—and the color, so bright, even in the darkness before the flash, and so green.



The author would like to thank Jessie Horsting and Harlan Ellison for their assistance in the writing of this story.

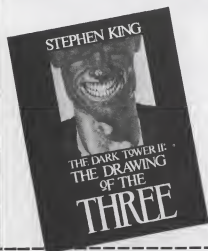
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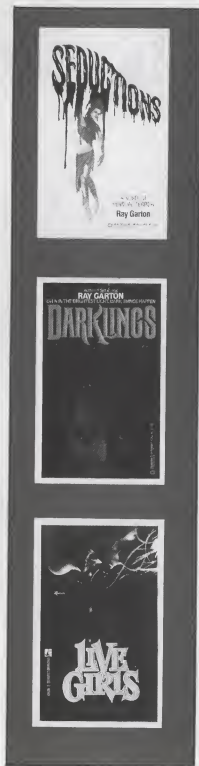
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RAY GARTON

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS TOO MUCH?

STILL IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES, RAY GARTON is one of horror's fastest-rising stars. His first novel, Seductions, debuted in mass market with a whopping 75,000 copies in its initial run. Darklings, Invaders From Mars and Live Girls followed, each a brisk seller for fans of Garton's brand of erotic horror fiction.

His backgrounds are the urban underbelly, his focus is the dark corners of sexual fantasy and organic terror, his delivery is pure Sam Kinison.

Garton discusses his career, his ongoing confrontation with censorship and his own personal terrors — the Seventh Day Adventists.

BY SARAH WOOD



RAY GARTON AND HIS WIFE.

Your problems with the Adventists began with the sale of your first novel. What happened?

When I wrote my first novel I had just quit college. . . well, let me back up a little. . . I was in college studying psychology, and I managed, through some act of God, through a friend of a friend, to meet a literary agent. Well, a man who calls himself a literary agent, anyway. So, I figured I'd hit the big time and I'd better quit school and devote all my time to writing.

How old were you then?

I was 19.

And this was in what year?

It was in 1982. So anyway, I quit college and stayed in the community; I was going to a Seventh Day Adventist College, and had gone to Seventh Day Adventist schools throughout my entire education, so when I quit school I stayed in the area because most of my friends were there; these were people that I'd grown up with. Practically all the Adventists in California pretty much go to the same college, Pacific Union College.

I stayed in the community and wrote my book and word got out that I was writing a horror novel. Well, it was bad enough that I was writing a novel, because fiction is a no-no to the Adventist Church. Their prophet, Ellen White, who was hit on the head with a rock as a child, claimed that fiction rots the brain,

and horror fiction is probably the ultimate sin. So I was writing a horror novel and word got out. They slashed my tires, they put dog shit in my car, I started getting obscene phone calls. . . well, not your average obscene phone calls. . . to me they were obscene but they weren't "heavy breathers" or "What are you wearing tonight?," they were more like (in a low, sinister voice) "Are you keeping the Sabbath?" They were telling me what God says, and what Ellen White says, and what the Church says, things like that. So I stayed there as long as I could, I really didn't want to leave because I love the area, but the last straw was, I was on my way back to my apartment after going to a coffee shop one night, and someone knew that I make this trip every night. They waited for me in a car behind a tree and as I drove by they pulled out, followed me, got really close to my car, stuck a gun out the window and shot at me twice. And that's when I decided it was probably time to move.

And you came down to Los Angeles?

I came down to Los Angeles, and they followed me. I got my tires slashed again, more phone calls, some of your general everyday vandalism. Adventists actually came to my door to give me literature. I don't know why. What did they think they were going to do, win me back? And I am still, to this day, about five years later, getting phone calls.

So it's still continuing. Has your increased fame and public exposure served to protect you?

Well, it's done things to change it. There's a deli in St. Helena, in the Napa Valley, where I hang out a lot whenever I'm in the area. A lot of the Adventist college students go to this deli, that is, the *really* evil ones who eat meat. I was there a few months ago and this girl named Myrna walked in. I'd gone to school with her from the first grade onwards. She was one of these debutante types, she wanted nothing to do with me back then, and when I came out with my books, she thought, "Well, he's possessed, of course." So I'm sitting in this deli minding my own business, writing, and she walks in with her new husband — they've been married like four days. And she comes over to me and gives me this huge hug, a huge kiss, and goes, "Ray, Ray, I hear you're so famous, I hear you're writing books and they're selling like crazy. . . " I threw up. I mean, I returned none of her hugs; in fact when she put her arms around me I cringed because, well, she has a moustache. A very pretty girl, but she has a moustache. And the first thing that came into my head was to look up at her and say, "Myrna, you still have that moustache." But I didn't. I guess I'm just still too fucking nice.

Your first releases, Seductions and Darklings, were plagued by mishaps—low advances and Pinnacle Books' bankruptcy. Did you have any warnings of disaster?

At the time I finished *Darklings*, my editor, Mike Bradley, was making noises about there being problems at Pinnacle. He didn't specify what they were and I figured they were problems between the people working there, such as personality problems, but he and I were pretty close and as things got worse he started telling me there was a chance that Pinnacle might dissolve. This didn't make me feel too good, but he told me not to panic. He said, "Don't worry, don't worry, it's not definite yet, it's still

"They're deeply offended at

possible that we may save things." So I wasn't too panicky. I talked to my agent and he said, "Ooh no, they're not going to do that. They're not going to fold. They never do that; these people make too much money to fold." Well, about two weeks after my agent told me this, *Darklings* was released. It hit the stores and about a week after that I got a call from my editor and he said, "I hate to tell you this, but I'm out of a job. Everybody I work with is out of a job; we're going bankrupt." I was devastated because I knew this meant I wasn't going to get any royalties for these books. And two weeks later, two whole weeks later, my agent calls me and says, "I hear that Pinnacle is maybe going bankrupt." And I thought, "You asshole, they've been bankrupt for two weeks now!" So I got a new agent.

Did you ever get the rights back?

I never got the rights, I never found out how many sold, I never got any kind of royalty statement.

So they're still out there in literary limbo?

Yeah.

Did anybody pick up the ruins of Pinnacle?

Yes. Zebra Books has bought them and there's a chance that *Darklings* and *Seductions* may be rereleased through Zebra. It depends on whether or not they want them. They're going to go through Pinnacle's inventory and see which ones they want to release and which ones they don't want to release. If they don't want to release *Darklings* and *Seductions*, then the rights will revert back to me again and I can resell them if I want.

So far you've had three novels published—Seductions, Darklings and Live Girls—plus the novelization of the recent remake of Invaders From Mars. Tell me about your new novel and the other works that you have coming out.

Let's see, 1988 is going to be a huge year for me. In February, the anthology *Silver Screams* is coming out (in limited and trade hardcover editions from Dark Harvest Press, with a paperback edition to be released by Tor Books around Halloween) in which I have a story, "Sinema." "Sinema" deals with the Seventh Day Adventists' unwillingness to let their children go to movies. It's about a boy who desperately wants to go to movies and finds that the only way he's going to get there is by black-mailing his child-killing Sabbath school teacher.

I also have a novella coming out in the next *Night Visions* anthology, in October, called "In The Blood." (Also to be published in hardcover limited and trade editions by Dark Harvest.) Actually, both "Sinema" and "In The Blood" are Seventh Day Adventist horror stories. Interestingly enough, "In The Blood" is about a man who writes erotic murder mysteries.

After a nervous breakdown, attempted suicide, and a stint in a mental hospital, he returns to the little town in Napa Valley that he was earlier chased out of by the Seventh Day Adventists for writing what he writes. He gets involved with them again by falling in love with a girl who is the cousin of his old arch enemy, back in the old days, and this girl is a werewolf.

There's a lot of this that's autobiographical, except I've never fallen in love with a werewolf—although I have dated some real monsters.

Tell me about your next novel, Crucifix.

Actually it's going to be coming out in hardcover in March from Dark Harvest under the title *Crucifix Autumn*, which was the original title of the book. There will also be a paperback edition, in summer, I hope, from Pocket Books. It's about a bunch of directionless teenagers in the San Fernando Valley who fall under the spell of a sort of MTV-type Pied Piper of the Eighties. He leads them into an underworld of drugs and sex... my God, I'm talking like cover copy... he leads them into this word of drugs and sex and crime while their parents are sitting around scratching their heads going, "What's happening to our kids? It's the rock 'n' roll! It's the sex in the movies! It's drugs!" And both the parents and religious organizations begin pointing their fingers at symptoms rather than at causes.

Or themselves.

Exactly. That's why the book is being so sliced up by my current publisher. They're deeply offended at the message of the book.

Is this a problem you have a lot with your editors, that is, them wanting to take out the so-called "offensive" parts?

I've had a problem with that on the last two books. For *Live Girls* and *Crucifix*. To explain what was done, I'll compare it to a man who owned a theatre, I think it was in Korea, who rented *The Sound Of Music* to show there, but after watching it he decided that it was too long, so he went through and cut all of the songs. That's a true story, and I've had the same experience with my last two books. My editor has gone through and cut all of the songs.

Would you go so far as to call it censorship?

It is censorship, nobody can tell me it's not. I talked to a former editor from that company, actually two different people, and they both told me that if you have a political or moral message with them the publisher does not agree, they will give you no end of hell. And they have already given me no end of hell by moving me from mainstream to horror; they've decided that they're going to put my books down in the basement of the

the message of the book."

bookstore; they're tired of me; they have no use for me any more. But they won't sell *Crucifax*. Avon wants to buy *Crucifax* but the publisher won't sell. This has happened three times before that I know of—that they've been able to sell a book that they're no longer interested in, but would rather lose money, publish the book very, very low on the totem pole, and spite the writer who has offended them rather than sell the book to another publisher. *Crucifax* has upset them on many levels, and they've cut out several major scenes. One of them is an abortion, and I think they took the abortion scene as being pro-abortion. It wasn't intended as pro-abortion or anti-abortion, it was just an abortion scene. It was meant to show that abortions are really unpleasant, they they're nasty and they shouldn't have to happen. But they do happen, and since they do happen, let's learn to live with them. But they don't like that, so they cut that scene. The reaction of the parents, who are dolts, to their kids' situation, is cut entirely—just butchered. They've lost most of the message of the book. . . and I really didn't intend for it to have a message in the first place, that sounds awfully pretentious and hoity-toity. When I started writing the book I had no intention of having a message, but when I was two-thirds of the way through it I was shocked to find out that the book contains some relevance to these kids who sit around watching MTV with a joint up their nose all day.

Why use horror as the medium for the message?

Because just like science fiction is a literature of ideas, I think horror is a literature of feelings, and I think that the feelings that I want to get across on paper are more easily conveyed in the genre of horror than they are in any other form of writing.

You, I think, more than anybody else, deal with sex explicitly, and you do it so well. Why so much graphic sex?

Okay. I figure what I do best is scare people on paper, and the best way to scare people is by using something that everybody is familiar with. And everybody, and I don't care what they say, is familiar with sex. I mean for everybody, at one point or another, sex is important in their lives.

Well, either the practice of it or the denial of it.

Exactly. So sex is the one area where I can hit everybody where they live, whether it is something they refuse to participate in and will have nothing to do with whatsoever, whether for moral or religious or whatever reasons, or whether it's something they accept as a normal fact of life. Or if it's someone like a former girlfriend of mine who will screw anything that moves. It's the one area through which I feel I can reach everybody.

You're part of the so-called "splatter punk" movement. What do you feel are the advantages of writing "cheap and explicit" horror over the more restrained, conventional type of "literary" horror?

Well, there are other writers who prefer to be very, very subtle to the point of being boring. I mean, even Charles Grant has admitted that nothing much happens in his fiction, and I'm one of the prime backers of that statement—nothing much really does happen in his fiction. I don't think that writers should protect their readers from anything; I don't think we should think to ourselves, "Well, that's really ugly, I'd better not show 'em that." I feel like it's less of an insult to show them the real thing. When somebody dies, it's ugly and it's painful; and it's not easy to kill a person. A good example of that is a scene in





R A Y G A R T O N

"I would much rather be more honest with my readers and show them how it is."

the movie *Blood Simple*, a scene where a man who has been shot and is presumed to be dead is driven by someone out into the middle of nowhere to be buried, and it turns out he's not dead yet, and the guy does everything he can to kill him—beats him with a shovel, and so on, and ends up burying the guy alive. And that's the way it is; it's really not that easy to kill a person.

As anybody who has ever attempted suicide will attest.

Yes. Not many people realize this, but most of the people who put bullets in their brains don't die, and I think it's a shame that we're leading people to believe that we're as fragile as we appear to be on television and in a lot of movies. But on the other hand, I think the most dangerous kind of television or films are the kinds like *The A-Team* where things blow up, people fly through the air but nobody dies, nobody bleeds, nobody breaks any bones. I would much rather be more honest with my readers and show them how it is. I sort of see myself and other writers as doctors. We come into the office and the patient looks up and says, "How long have I got?," and it would be nice to be able to be subtle about it, but it doesn't work like that.

Who else do you like to read in the field? Who do you admire and consider to have influenced you?

Who I admire and who has influenced me are two different questions. Stephen King influenced me a lot—I know everybody says that, but it's true. I mean, gosh, I was still in grammar school when his first book came out, and as soon as I read *Carrie* I just knew that's what I had to do, that's what God put me on this earth for, Seventh Day Adventists notwithstanding. I also have admired William Goldman a great deal; he's not a

horror writer, but he was a big influence on me. People I'm reading and admire at the moment are Thomas Tessier and Dean Koontz. Alsq, Joe Lansdale—I've only read a couple of short things of his, but I'm convinced he's one of the best around. I also like McCammon.

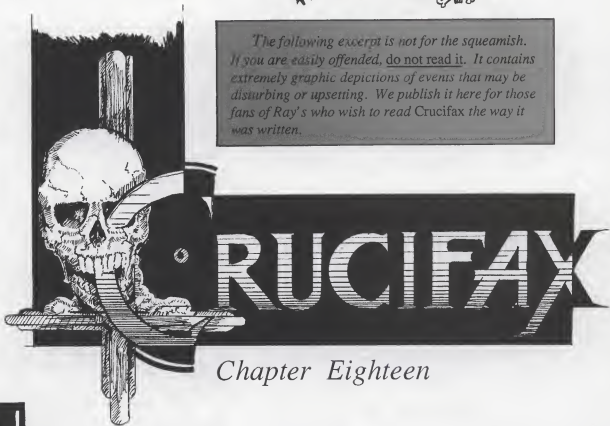
One last question. Probably the most striking thing about your writing style is its cinematic quality, by which I mean the intense visual descriptions. To what extent have you been influenced by movies rather than literature?

Very much. However, I don't usually prefer to watch "splatter" movies because they're usually so bad; I prefer to watch "quality" horror over everything else. Take for example *Friday The 13th*. More than anything else I can think of, it has given a bad name to the horror genre. I sit in coffee shops when I write late at night, and these dorks come up and sit next to me and say (in a moron drawl), "Whaddaya writin', a book?" and I say, "As a matter of fact, I am." "So what kinda books ya write?" "Oh, I write horror novels." "Oh, like *Friday The 13th*." And every time they say that, I imagine that horrible music, pulling out a knife and stabbing them to death.

In fact, just two nights ago, I was sitting in a truckstop, minding my own business, sitting at the counter, and this cretin from Mars comes over to me and gets really close in my face, and he's got these wild, starin' eyes, and he's got breath from Hell and body odor that you can see, and he gets really close to me and says, "So whaddya writin' man?" "I'm writing a novella, a short novel." "Man, what's it about, man?" So I tell him it's a horror novel and he gets this funny look in his eyes and he cocks his head and he says (in a manic whisper), "Oh, man, is that, like, all you think of, all the time, you sit around thinkin' about, like, that killin', like in *Friday The 13th*?" And I try to explain to him the difference between *Friday The 13th* and real horror. But he has a brain about as deep as a petri dish, and I can't get the difference across to him. He finally leaves and says, "Well, man, good luck, I hope you have a really great career," and he goes up to the cashier to pay his bill and he says to the cashier, "See that man sittin' over there? I think you better keep an eye on him. He may weird out soon, I think he might be trouble." So he writes his phone number down and says, "If he's any trouble, gimme a call, 'cause I live just down the street and I've got a lotta guns." I'm not kidding; I was watching the cashier as he said this and I watched her face drop. She came over to me, she knows me really well, and said, "Do you know what that guy just said?" so she told me and I couldn't believe it; it's been the talk of the truckstop for a week. But she gave me his phone number, which is unfortunate for him. I haven't gotten hold of him yet, but I'm still trying...

→ Warning ☠ ←

The following excerpt is not for the squeamish. If you are easily offended, do not read it. It contains extremely graphic depictions of events that may be disturbing or upsetting. We publish it here for those fans of Ray's who wish to read Crucifax the way it was written.



Chapter Eighteen

Jeff and Lily have joined forces to find their friend Nikki who has become deeply involved with a dangerous cult led by a mysterious man named Mace. Nikki is young, pregnant, and in trouble. They travel through the sewers—the only route they know to Mace's stronghold—while Mace drives a special guest back to the lair....

The reverend sat stiffly in the passenger seat of his van as the tires below him screamed around the curves of Beverly Glen. The windshield wipers droned back and forth and, at the wheel, Mace grinned into the night, occasionally glancing at Bainbridge.

The reverend could feel the creatures at his feet, three of them, pressing themselves against his ankles and crawling over his shoes. There were more in the back, squeaking as the van rounded the sharp corners.

Bainbridge's mouth was dry as old felt and he could not stop trembling as he prayed frantically for deliverance from what he was certain was the devil's henchman.

If not the devil himself.

"What... what are you going to, to do to me?" he asked, his voice a frog-like croak.

"Do to you?" Mace laughed. "Nothing. Just taking you to a party."

"Why me? Why am I being *tried* like this?" He closed his eyes as they shrieked around another curve.

"You're not being tried. I'm sorry you feel that way. Why don't you just think of me as... oh, how about a buddy? Not friends yet," he chuckled, "just buddies. But later we'll—"

"You're *evil*! This is a trial, a test of my faith!" The reverend clenched his eyes tighter, wanting to cover his ears, but afraid to move because of the beasts at his feet.

Mace's laugh was deep and rich and he punched the dashboard jovially.

"Black and white," he said. "Everything is black and white to you people, good and evil. You're white and I'm black, all black, evil to the bone, right? But, Reverend, you live in a gray world, don't you know that? There is no black, no white, only gray. You say I'm evil, but those kids are *nuts* about me, Rev; I make them happy. Now, is that evil? Making them happy? Huh? I don't think so. Now, *you*. You're supposed to be good, all white, but you've been sneaking around with somebody's little girl and now she's pregnant and you won't let her do what she wants with the baby that's growing in *her* belly. Hah! That's *goodness*? You see? We're all gray. Some are blacker than others, maybe a few are *all* black, but I can promise you

BY RAY GARTON

MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI-31

one thing, Reverend. Nobody . . . *nobody* is all white."

Taking in a deep, unsteady breath, Bainbridge said, "Satan uses the truth to tell lies and, and, we're told he can, can fool the, the very elite, and I will *not* listen to—"

"I'm. Not. Satan." His tone was very serious now, almost threatening. "I'm not from hell or heaven. I'm from . . . nowhere. And you brought me *here*. You. Your fellow clergy. All the many, many moms and dads here in this Valley." He drove in silence for a while, then said, "There is no place in this universe for gaps, Reverend. I've come to fill the gaps that you have made."

Bainbridge clenched his fists in his lap and continued to pray. . . .

The hand pulled Jeff's head back hard as a ragged voice cried, "Leave us alone! Leave us *alone!*" Jeff saw the bat lift high over his face, saw it stop before swinging down again, and he slammed his arm up, knocking the hand away, felt Lily grab his coat as they dashed away from the opening, avoiding the bat by inches as they moved on down the walkway in a staggering, swaying run, their hands slapping the wall, their feet scraping over the grimy cement.

"Get away!" the voice cried as the bat smacked against the wall once, twice, again. Footsteps followed them a few feet, then stopped.

They didn't look back, kept moving, passed another intersection and another, their gasps echoing in the darkness. The sewer veered left, then right as their feet clanged over another metal plank.

"Wait, wait!" Lily panted, pulling on Jeff's coat.

When he turned and shined the light on her, he saw her tears and she stepped into the crook of his arm.

"What . . . what was that?" she asked.

"I don't know. A bum, I guess. I hear a lot of them live down here."

"But what was that room in the—"

"Sh!"

In the silence, water dripped and pattered and sewage gushed. And somewhere in the darkness, music played.

"What?" Lily asked.

"Hear that?"

She listened a moment. "Where's it coming from?"

Jeff faced the opposite wall and listened intently. Mingled with the music were distant, garbled voices, laughter; they were coming from his right, from the direction in which they'd been walking.

"C'mon," he said, taking her hand and leading her along the walkway, the flashlight shining before him. Up ahead, he saw a couple of rats that quickly skittered out of sight before Lily saw them.

As they pressed on, the music grew louder, the voices and laughter more distinct, although they were still faint, ghostly.

"Sounds like a party," Jeff whispered.

The closer they got, the clearer and louder the voices became; the music was replaced by a loud, fast-talking voice that Jeff recognized as a radio disc jockey. Someone was listening to the radio.

"—c'mere before you—"

"—ha-haaaah—"

"—me another one of those—"

The music began again: Robert Palmer.

The louder they became, the more difficult it was to tell exactly from where the voices and music were coming.

Until they found the hole.

He could tell the hole had been knocked in the wall fairly recently because there were still bits of rubble and a few bricks scattered around on the walkway beneath it.

"In here," Jeff breathed, shining the light through the rough-edged hole.

"What is it?"

The light fell on dark wet walls, stacks of boxes, twisting pipes connected by fluttering cobwebs, and a steep metal staircase. There was a soft, shimmering glow coming from the top of the stairs.

Jeff leaned close to Lily's ear and whispered, "Be very quiet."

He carefully pulled himself through the hole, then angled the light so Lily could see her way through. With Jeff a step ahead, they made their way slowly and silently to the staircase where Jeff turned off the flashlight; the glow from above gave them enough light to see their way. As they carefully climbed the stairs, trying to keep their footsteps from sounding on the metal steps, the voices crystallized, became clear and distinct.

A male voice: "Did you hear that?"

A female voice: "Yeah, it came from up there."

Another male voice: "The door? Is Mace here?"

They hunkered down as they reached the top of the stairs and something clattered loudly on the next floor: footsteps on metal stairs.

"I'm back!" The voice was loud, deep, booming: it was Mace.

A chorus of greetings replied and Jeff was surprised by the number of people he heard.

He climbed the remaining steps on his hands and knees, peering over the top of the staircase. There had once been a door there, but only hinges remained now. The room he looked into was large and appeared to have once been two rooms; the remaining portion of a wall jutted three quarters of the way across the middle of the room, then ended in a jagged, broken edge where it had been torn away. Bricks and chunks of broken plaster littered the floor. There were three holes in the tom-away wall; bars of soft light shined through from the other side, cutting the dusty, smoky darkness.

Beyond the wall, Jeff could make out some movement in the hazy light. He saw a couple of kerosene lanterns on wooden crates. Murmuring voices were occasionally punctuated by a burst of laughter or a passionate cry.

R A Y G A R T O N

Reverend Bainbridge was coming down a spiral staircase; Mace was one step behind him, holding a lantern.

"And I have a visitor," Mace said.

Once they were off the stairs, Mace stood beside the reverend and lifted his lantern, illuminating the little man's face.

"This is Reverend James Bainbridge," Mace said. "Some of you may already know him. C'mon in, Reverend."

Bainbridge looked terrified and moved like a bird as he followed Mace deeper into the room, disappearing behind the wall.

A scuttling noise came from the spiral staircase and Jeff's mouth closed over the terrified groan that rose from his chest when his eyes followed the sound.

The creatures that had chased him from the abandoned health club were milling around the bottom of the staircase, sniffing the floor, their eyes glinting in the lantern light.

Jeff's throat suddenly seemed filled with cotton and he reflexively put his hand over Lily's, needing to touch someone, to reassure himself that he was not alone.

"Take your coat off, Reverend," Mace said congenially.

"Get comfortable. We're very informal here."

They were out of sight, hidden by the wall, but Jeff could hear their movements above the music and soft voices.

"Nikki!" Bainbridge wailed as if in pain. "My God, Nikki."

.. Then, angrily: "What have you *done* to her?"

Lily squeezed Jeff's hand.

"I haven't done anything," Mace said.

Jeff felt Lily stiffen beside him, looked to see her staring intently at the wall three yards away.

Mace said, "You're here because you want to be, aren't you, Nikki?"

Faintly: "Yes."

"She's been drugged!" the reverend barked.

"Oh, she may be high, but I can assure you she hasn't been *drugged*, Reverend. No one here has been drugged and no one is here against their will. Nikki . . . why don't you come out of the pool."

"I'm taking her out of here," the reverend said, his voice trembling.

"I don't think she wants to go."

"I'll call the police."

"Reverend, I'd like you to meet three very good friends of mine. Officers Peter Wyatt, Jake Margolin, and Harvey Towne." Deep, male voices, groggy and garbled, greeted the reverend. One of them laughed. "They're off duty right now, but if you feel you need a policeman, I'm sure one of them would be more than happy to help you."

After a long pause, the reverend whispered, "I was right." Something seemed to have left his voice—reason, hope, maybe both—leaving behind a hollow, helpless sound. "You . . . you are . . . evil."

Mace laughed and said, "C'mon, Nikki."

The reverend pleaded, "Nikki, Nikki, what are you *doing* here?"

"Tell him, Nikki. Why did you come?"

"Because Mace is . . . gonna help with my . . . problem."

"Tell him *what* problem."

"My . . . my baby."

"Oh, God, dear God, don't do this, Nikki." Bainbridge sounded near tears.

Lily put a hand over her mouth and squeezed close to Jeff.

"Nikki," the reverend went on, his voice a desperate hiss now, "*think* about it, about what you're doing."

"I can't keep it. I . . . I *can't*. I . . . I haven't finished school. My . . . my mother would . . . my mother..."

"But it's . . . Nikki, it's a-a-a—" He gulped back a sob. "—sin, a horrible *sin*, a moral *crime*!"

"Nikki," Mace said, "did the reverend ever mention that what he did to *you* was a sin?"

"Mm-hm. He said God would—" She giggled. "—understand. And forgive."

"Okay, Reverend. God will understand Nikki's reasons and He'll forgive her."

"But this is *murder*!"

"Yeah. And what are the words for what you did, Reverend?" Footsteps, rustling movement. "Adultery?" Mace's voice grew softer. "Fornication?" Softer still. "Maybe . . . rape?"

Jeff and Lily turned to one another. He saw the same realization in her eyes that he felt: Reverend Bainbridge was the father of Nikki's baby. Lily put her face in her hands and slowly shook her head.

"Is *this* what you did, Reverend?" Mace whispered. "Did you touch her like this. . . ? Like this?"

Nikki moaned, sighed.

"Did you touch her—no, no; lie down, Nikki—did you touch her here, Reverend?"

Lily's eyes burned with fear for her friend; she looked ready to make a dash across the room and around the wall.

"No!" Bainbridge cried. "Stop! Stop *this now*!"

Mace laughed.

Nikki gasped ecstatically.

The reverend sobbed.

The voices seemed quieter, more attentive to whatever was happening on the other side of the wall.

"Is *this* what you did?" Mace hissed, voice wet, lips smacking. "Is *this* what it was like?"

"I'm leaving!" Bainbridge shouted, his feet scraping on the cement. "Nikki, if you would only—" Something made a wretched throaty hiss and Bainbridge swallowed his words with a gasp.

Jeff recognized that sound. . . .

Lily started to sit up, but Jeff put a hand on her shoulder and firmly held her down.

There were no lanterns at their end of the room; at the other end, with the exception of a few figures shifting in the hazy darkness, everyone had gone behind the wall. If he were quiet, Jeff thought the lack of light at their end might sufficiently hide him until he got to the wall and could look through one of those holes.

R A Y G A R T O N

Jeff turned to Lily, laid a finger over his lips, and breathed into her ear, "Stay here."

She frowned at him, cocked her head.

Jeff started across the room, moving in a crouch, his feet crunching softly over the floor, too softly to be heard above the music and the quiet buzz of voices.

As he crept to the wall, Jeff heard Nikki's soft murmurs of pleasure grow steadily louder, more intense, heard Mace whispering, chuckling. Amidst the voices were smacking, slurping noises.

Speaking with malevolent deliberation, Mace whispered, "Is this . . . what you did . . . before you planted . . . your seed in her . . . Reverend?"

Nearing the wall, Jeff felt as if a steel band were slowly tightening around his chest, making each breath more difficult, squeezing his heart within his ribcage. The back of his neck was damp with sweat.

When he reached the wall, Jeff cautiously peered over the edge of the hole on the right end, instantly taking in all the details on the other side.

To the right, two guitars were propped against the wall and drums and a keyboard were set up between amplifiers; four of the dark creatures were crawling over the instruments, sniffing curiously. Beyond the instruments in a murky corner, Jeff saw what looked like a generator. About six feet in front of the instruments there was, indeed, a swimming pool in which shapes moved within darkness. To Jeff's left, Mace stood in the shallow end of the pool facing the wall, his tall lean frame rising above the darkness below. Lying before him on two fluffy-looking cushions, her legs spread, naked but for a blue skirt open in front, was Nikki. A lantern shined on each side of her, making her skin look pale. Her nipples were dark and erect and a dark, oddly-shaped cross rested between her breasts, attached to a cord that went around her neck. Trails of saliva glistened around her breasts and over her belly.

The reverend stood at her head, several of the creatures huddled between him and Nikki; two of them were standing on their hind legs like guards, teeth bared, eyes threatening.

Mace smiled up at Bainbridge, his lips and chin wet; he passed his hands over Nikki's body, caressing and gently squeezing her full breasts, slipping his fingers between her legs.

"Did you do this, Reverend?" Mace whispered, wrapping his lips around a wet finger and licking off the juices. "Or were you too anxious to fuck her?"

Mace leaned forward and slowly, luxuriously, slipped his tongue between the flowery lips of Nikki's vagina and moved his head up and down, up and down, licking his way up to her belly, her breast, sucking loudly. Nikki's breaths were thick with moans of pleasure.

"No!" the reverend snapped, but his voice was weak. "Stop this, stop . . . this . . . now . . ."

Mace raised his head and purred, "Look familiar, Reverend?" then pressed his face hard into the mound of dark hair between them. Nikki's body stiffened, her head tilted back, surrounded by her shiny brown hair, her mouth opening, closing, then opening again as she looked up at the reverend and slowly

smiled, purring, "... feels . . . soooo . . . good . . ."

Bainbridge frantically muttered prayers under his breath.

The movement within the pool settled down.

The music played on.

Water dripped around them as Bainbridge whimpered.

Nikki suddenly arched her back, her hands closing over the edges of the cushions beneath her; she made a strangled gurgle in her throat and the pleasure in her face suddenly turned to confusion and fear.

Mace's hands slid up her body, over her stomach; his long fingers cupped her breasts, pinched her nipples as Nikki sucked in a long and desperate breath.

Jeff realized he'd been holding his breath, clenching his teeth until his jaws hurt, and he slowly exhaled.

Something was wrong, very, very wrong. . .

Nikki lifted her buttocks from the cushion, pressing herself up to Mace as his head twisted and turned, bobbed, twitched, his hair falling over his shoulders and brushing against her thighs. Nikki's tongue protruded stiffly from her mouth and she coughed.

Something crunched behind Jeff and he spun around to see Lily hurrying toward him. Thinking she probably shouldn't see what was happening beyond the wall, he waved for her to go back, but she kept coming, her eyes and mouth wide with fear as she sidled up to him and peered over his shoulder, her hands gripping his sides just above his waist.

Nikki's body convulsed, her head jerked forward and back as Mace's head continued to move between her legs. He made a deep grumbling sound in his chest as she coughed again and again, her right fist pounding the cushion.

Lily clutched Jeff's sides tightly and he heard her breath quicken.

Nikki's stomach moved.

Jeff blinked several times, not sure of what he'd seen.

It moved again, rolled, bulged, then flattened.

The reverend raised his voice: "... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death—"

Nikki's entire body quaked.

"—I will fear no evil for thou art with me—"

She coughed again and spit rose from her mouth in a spray and rained back down on her as her stomach rose, lowered, rose again as her fists opened and closed.

"—thy rod and thy staff they comfort me—"

Mace's eyes rolled up to stare at the reverend and he pulled his face away from Nikki, chuckling—

"—thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies—"

—but something was strung from his mouth to Nikki's vagina—

"—thou anointest my head with oil—"

—something long and thick and wet, with dark streaks of viscous matter dribbling from it as it pulled out farther and farther.

"—my cup runneth over surely g-good-goodness and mercy—"

Dark lumps clung to it as it pulled out of Nikki, coated with



R A Y G A R T O N

a slimy film, pulling out . . . out . . . out . . .

The reverend staggered backward out of Jeff's line of vision, bumping the wall, babbling, "Get thee hence, Satan! Get thee hence, Satan, *get thee hence!*"

Nikki made a horrible belching sound as she sat up on the cushions, then fell back again. With the sound of tearing flesh, Mace's tongue pulled out of Nikki, curling upward like a snake. A quivering black-red gob hung from the tip, dripping and gelatinous, bunched around a small lump that rested on the end of Mace's tongue.

"Oh, God," the reverend gibbered, "dear Jesus, merciful Father in heaven!"

Jeff felt light-headed and dizzy as he watched, felt as if he'd somehow slipped into someone else's nightmare, and he pushed Lily back, tried to keep her away from the wall, but she just stepped forward again.

As the dark clot of viscous matter neared Mace's gaping mouth, it dropped off into the darkness and landed with a wet slap, leaving behind the walnut-sized lump which Mace sucked through his smile, holding it between his teeth as he grinned up at Reverend Bainbridge. He lifted one of the lanterns and held it level with his head, illuminating his face and the small, pale object in his mouth. . . .

Its tiny, slightly bulbous eyes. . . .

The minuscule arms. . . .

Jeff's stomach turned when he realized what the lump was; his throat tensed and he tried to push Lily back again, thinking, *Jesus Christ this isn't happening isn't it is not is not happening!*

"Nikki?" Lily whispered.

Jeff turned to her and angrily shook his head, trying to tell her to be quiet.

"Nikki?" Her voice was louder, coarse and dry, and Jeff pressed his palm over her mouth, craning his head to watch Mace.

Chuckling, Mace closed his teeth on the small, bubble-like skull of the fetus with soggy crunch, and dark fluids dribbled down his chin as he began to chew noisily, laughing, stroking Nikki's quivering thighs.

Then several things happened at once:

Jeff heard the reverend's body slide down the wall and plop to the floor with a mournful wail.

Nikki rolled her head to one side and vomited.

Lily pulled away from Jeff and screamed, *Nikkiiii!*

There was a startled murmur of voices in the pool and Mace lifted his eyes, peering through the hole in the wall and looking directly at Jeff, chin glistening, jaw working.

Jeff pulled away from the wall so suddenly he nearly fell.

He spun around and pushed Lily, rasping, "Run!" as he heard the chitter and scrape of small claws on the cement floor coming around the wall. "Run, run!"

"But N-Nikki's—"

"Just go, goddammit!" He grabbed her arm and pulled her along, stumbling on a chunk of plaster.

As they clambered down the stairs into the sub-basement, Jeff heard the vicious sound of snapping teeth behind them, turned on the flashlight, missed a step, and for an instant, was in

the air, limbs sprawled; then he hit the floor with a grunt, a needle-like pain shooting through his shoulder.

Shouting upstairs.

Hurried footsteps.

Another loud cry from Nikki, sounding different now, empty, resigned.

"Get up," Lily cried, grabbing his arm. "Get up, Jesus Christ, *get up!*"

Jeff rolled onto his back; the flashlight beam swept upward and was reflected in a dozen golden eyes skittering down the stairs.

Nikki pulled, gasping. "Now, now, NOW!" and Jeff struggled onto his hands and knees, half crawling to the hole in the wall, gripping the edge, pulling himself to his feet as Lily crawled through.

Claws scratched over the cement behind him, teeth snapped, and the guttural squawks the creatures made sent slivers of ice through his veins as he fell through the hole, nearly tumbling over the edge of the walkway and into the rushing stream of blackness below.

Lily was before him, pulling on his sleeves, babbling, "Get up c'mon please Jeff get up now get—"

Her eyes turned to the hole behind him, widened, and she screamed as she backed away, and above her scream, above the wet sounds of the sewer, Jeff heard them coming through the hole and began to crawl, the flashlight beam cutting wildly through the darkness as he felt them at his feet.

Kicking his feet, hoping to hit them, Jeff managed to stand, his left hand sliding over the wet wall in search of something to grasp. As he rushed toward Lily, he saw her face twist into a mask of horror as she waved her arms, screaming, "Jesus oh God they're right be-be-behind—"

Jeff spun around and swept a foot over the cement, knocking three of them off the walkway, then swept it back again to kick the others rushing toward him.

One stood on its hind legs, hissed, and dove through the air toward him while his leg was still raised. He tried to hop backward but lost his balance, flailed his arms, and fell, splashing into the stream of sewage.

Lily screamed shrilly.

Jeff thrashed in the waste, gulping air, anchoring his feet on the bottom and gripping the edge of the walkway, trying to keep the flashlight safely above his head.

"Get out of here, Lily!" he shouted. "Find a manhole and get out!"

"No, dammit, give me—"

"Go! I'm right behind you!" He put his arms on the walkway and started to pull himself up as Lily's footsteps faded.

The sewage was waist deep; dark lumps washed around him, clung to his jacket, and the rancid odor filled his nostrils and throat.

Something grabbed onto his jacket and he looked down to see one of the creatures hanging by its teeth from his side, flat nostrils flaring, its teeth tearing into his jacket, and Jeff could not hold back the scream that tore from his chest as he brought

R A Y G A R T O N

the butt of the flashlight down hard, striking the creature between the eyes as he swayed precariously in the strong current.

The animal fell away.

Jeff tried once again to pull himself out and saw two black-booted feet suddenly standing before him.

"Help me!" he blurted without looking up. "Help me, please!"

A big hand took his arm and effortlessly lifted him out of the gutter and onto his feet.

"You're welcome to stay," Mace said pleasantly.

Jeff flinched, backed away from him. Mace's chin was still dark and dripping; meaty specks were stuck between his teeth. Jeff aimed the flashlight at him as if it were a gun.

"Is she dead?" Jeff croaked. "Did you kill her?"

"Nikki? No, no, course not. She's fine. I just did what she wanted."

Another step back.

Three of the creatures were sniffing around behind Mace; one of them rubbed itself against his ankle like a housecat.

"If you stick around," Mace went on, "maybe there's something you want, something I can—"

Jeff took several steps away from him. "What are you?"

Mace's smile was filled with such warmth that Jeff felt confused for a moment, thought that perhaps hurrying away was not the right thing to do, that maybe Mace wasn't so bad after all, because he seemed genuine, sincere. . . .

But there were still dark bloody flecks on his teeth, on his lips, and Jeff quickly remembered what he'd seen inside, what Mace had done. Jeff did not yet understand it, but he remembered. . . .

"What am I?" Mace repeated thoughtfully, wiping his chin with the heel of his hand. "I'm . . . a friend. That's all. Just a friend."

Jeff turned and followed in Lily's direction.

"You remember that," Mace called as Jeff found the open manhole, saw Lily's face peering down from the rainy street above. He grabbed the rungs and began to climb.

"You remember that, because you'll need a friend soon. You'll need a friend." With a hollow, echoing chuckle, Mace added, "Big brother."

*At 25, Ray Garton is already a well-known novelist and short story writer. He has stories in the anthologies *Book of the Dead* and *Silver Surfer*, and is hard at work on his eighth novel. Ray currently lives in Redlands, California, where he travels, feeds off the Southern California*



ACCORDING TO ROMERO, TWILIGHT BROUGHT THE VIRUS EARTHWARD, AND AFORE DECENT FOLKS COULD SWITCH FROM WRESTLIN TO NEWS, DEAD PEOPLE WAS UP 'N' WALKIN ALMOST AS GOOD AS THEIR SURVIVIN RELATIVES. PROBLEM WAS, WHAT THEY CALL "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE" WAS OUT FROM THE GIT. Y'SEE, WE LIKED SHOOTIN THEM ALMOST AS MUCH AS THEY LIKED EATIN US. IRA BEAUDINE SAID IT BEST: "WHY, HELL, WHAT YOU GOT HERE IS YOUR REVOLUTION IN ACTION. THESE DEAD PECKERWOODS IS LIKE NEW, IMPROVED HUMAN BEANS. THEY'RE SPOSTA REPLACE US, SEE? COS THIS OLE WORLD JUST AIN'T FITT FOR OLD PUDDS LIKE YOU 'N' ME NO MORE."

NOW, PERSONALLY, I THINK THE ONLY WAY IRA WOULD EVER GET STIFF WAS BY LIQUORIN UP. BUT THE FACT WAS, DEAD FOLKS WAS MARCHIN AND EATIN AND MARCHIN SOME MORE, AND PRETTY SOON THEY BEGAN TO OUTNUMBER THE REST OF US. SO JUST IN CASE WE HAF TA WAVE BYE-BYE ALTOGETHER, SOMEBODY SHOULD SET DOWN A CHRONICLE... IN CASE SOME O' THEM SPACE ALIENS LAND AND WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED HERE, PARDON MY FROG.

THIS HERE PUPPY IS CALLED BOOK OF THE DEAD. IT WAS THOUGHT UP AND PUT TOGETHER BY THESE FELLAS SKIPP 'N' SPECTOR (PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT A *SKIP INSPECTOR* WOULD BE SOMEBODY WHO CHECKS RECORD ALBUMS FOR SCRATCHES, HAW HAW HAW). WHAT THESE BOYS DID WAS A CHRONOLOGY OF THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE, FROM EARLY DAYS TO LATE, IN THE FORM OF STORIES BY ALL SORTS OF IMPORTANT AND FAMOUS HORROR-WRITER FOLKS. THEY ALL DONE PRETTY GOOD, TOO. AFORE THEY GOT ET.

LEMME SEE IF I CAN GET ALL THE NAMES RIGHT. THERE'S A COUPLE OF STEVES—KING AND BOYETT, AND SOMEBODY NAMED EDWARD BRYANT, AND ROBERT McCAMMON, AND JOE LANSDALE, AND DAVID SCHOW AND BRIAN HODGE...BUT I CAN'T FIGURE WHICH NAMES GO WITH WHAT WRITIN, SO YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FIGURE THAT OUT FORE YOUR OWNSELF. HELL, IT MIGHT EVEN BE FUN.

THERE'S A BUNCH MORE BAD DUDES IN THE ACTUAL BOOK. THESE CHUNKS ARE TO WHIET YOUR APPETITE. SORTA LIKE ONE O' THEM MOVIE TRAILERS. A PREVIEW.

AND IF YOU'RE READIN THIS AND ARE ALREADY DEAD, NEVER YOU MIND.

ART BY MARCUS ALLEN NICKERSON

BOOK OF THE DEAD

The men watched the little old ladies tap and scratch ineffectually against the Diner's thick plate-glass front window, their clawed fingers fluttering like the wings of injured birds.

"Don't look too mean to me," said Billy Gaspar, a strapping young man in a red plaid lumberjack shirt.

"You don't know squat about zombies," said Shine Willis, who was a few years Billy's senior and half a head taller. "I was up to the Springs last week when a bunch of 'em came boilin' out of a Greyhound bus downtown. They're faster than they look, and stronger, too. Especially if they been eatin' good."

"Where'd they come from?" Billy Gaspar said.

"Eventide Manor, most like. The nursing home." Shine grinned mirthlessly. "Musta been a zombie in the woodpile sometime in the night, I'd judge."

"We gotta kill 'em?" said Billy.

"Too old to fuck," said Shine. "Too tough to eat."

Billy's complexion seemed to slide from white to greenish.

"The one in the center," said Bertie Hernandez, "is my mother. Fuck her. Let's do it." He swung around on the counter seat and stood in one fluid motion. He slid the big .357 Magnum out of its holster and checked the cylinder.

"Nice piece," said Miguel Espinoza.

"Six old ladies," said Bertie. "I figure I can handle them."

"You want some help?"

Bertie shook his head. "Not unless they take a chunk out of me. Then shoot me quick." It all sounded matter-of-fact.

"Why don't all of you wait for Bobby Mack?" said Martha.

"Bobbie Mayack," Bertie mimicked her. "Your fag cop heart-throb? Fuck him. Let him find his own zombies to blow him."

"Bertie," said Henry Roybal. "There's no call for talk like that." The Diner's owner had stuck his head out of the kitchen. "And don't get any mess on the window. I washed it just yesterday."





B

Sailor drags an anchor-tattooed forearm across one eye. "Oh, Jesus," he says. "Whose idea was this?"

A little old lady deadhead reaches the corral fence ahead of the others. Part of her nose is missing; the rest flaps against one wrinkled, bluegray cheek in time with her sleepwalker's gait. She runs face-first into the fence, then steps back with a vaguely surprised look. Hanging shapelessly about her upper body is a ridiculously large, blue T-shirt. I'M WITH STUPID, it reads, with an arrow pointing to her left.

At the fence, Jo-Jo finishes his bit of cat and presses his cyanotic-tinged face against broad steel mesh. Beside him the other carnitropes jostle and vie mindlessly. The upraised elbow of one deadhead (PARTY ANIMAL) strikes the temple of a skinny woman wearing a blank T-shirt with a bumper sticker slapped onto it: I EAT ROAD KILL.


Sailor frowns. "Jo-Jo's watching us."

"They all do that, man," says Doughboy. "We look like those big ol' steaks in the cartoons."

"No, I mean. . . ." He squints. "There's something going on in that face."

* * *

hunger me jojo they call jojo and i move with them to jojo from their meat mouths i reach to hunger with light of hot above with bright the fence i grab and press my face toward their meat faces and jojo they say and i will eat



C

True believers spent their lives preparing to die. Wormboy preferred fighting to live. His survival ethics might become the first writ of a new doctrine. Another system would rise in time. Nobody ever really learned a goddamn thing.

He preferred heavy-caliber projectile peace of mind. Cordite calm. He had named his M60 Zombo and it was swell. One round made raspberry slush. Vaporize the head and the leftovers could not eat you or infect you with the geek germ.

And spraying on Pam kept them from sticking to the cookery.

Wormboy dumped his dishes in the steel tub sink and relaxed on his Valley View sofa. A basso toilet belch eased him into sleep and he dreamed about the first person he had ever eaten.

Wormboy's wet dream was just sneaking up on the gooshy part when another explosion jerked him back to reality and put his trusty .44 in his grasp quicker than a samurai's *katana*. It was getting to be a busy Monday.

Two dozen geeks, maybe more, were lurching toward the front gates of the Valley View. Wormboy's jaw unhinged. That did not stop his mouth from watering at the sight.

D

In other parts of the country, the dancers might be men or children, but here it was mostly women, with men used for target practice or for hunting. The Meat Boys would take the bodies and cut off the hands so they couldn't grab, run screws through their jaws to fasten on wire muzzles so they couldn't bite, and sell them to the honkeytonks about the time the germ started them stirring.

Tonk owners would put them inside a wire enclosures up front of their place, start the music, and men would pay five dollars to get in there and grab them and make like they were dancing, when all the women wanted was to grab and bite, which, muzzled and hand-less, they could not do.

If a man liked his partner enough, he could pay more money and have her tied to a cot in the back and he could get on her and do some business. Didn't have to hear no arguments or buy no presents or make promises or make them come, just fuck and hike. As long as the establishment sprayed the dead girls and women for maggots and kept them perfumed and didn't keep them so long hunks of meat would come off on a fella's dick, the customers were as happy as flies on shit.





E

This was not his kind of place, but still...the noise, lights and gyrations spoke of another kind of loneliness. It was a singles bar for the living dead, and it beckoned him in. Jim crossed the threshold, and with one dessicated hand he smoothed down his remaining bits of black hair.

And now he knew what Hell must be like: a smoky, rot-smelling pandemonium. Some of the things writhing on the dance floor were missing arms and legs, and one thin figure in the midst of the whirl lost its hand; the withering flesh skidded across the linoleum, was crushed underfoot as its owner scrambled after it; and then its owner was likewise pummeled down into a twitching mass. On the bandstand were two guitar players, a drummer, and a legless thing hammering at an electric organ. Jim avoided the dance floor, moving through the crowd toward the blue-neon bar. The drum's pounding offended him, in an obscene way; it reminded him too much of how his heartbeat used to feel before it clenched and ceased.

The bar's neon lit up the rotting faces like blue-shadowed Hallowe'en masks. One of them, down to shreds of flesh clinging to yellow bone, shouted something unintelligible and drank from a bottle of beer; the liquid streamed through the fissure in his throat and down over his violet shirt and gold chains. Flies swarmed around the bar, drawn to the reek, and Jim watched as the customers pressed forward. They reached into their pockets and change purses and offered freshly killed rats, roaches, spiders, and centipedes to the bartender, who placed the objects in a large glass jar that had replaced the cash register. Such was the currency of the Dead World, and a particularly juicy rat bought two bottles of Miller Lite.





F

Gunfire tore Michael Fournier to shreds before he could do more than sit up; other shots, fired in wild panic, blew chips off his marble gravestone...[he] fell back, most of him lying still, other parts of him still twitching.

But by then the whole graveyard seemed to be rippling, as if an earthquake were going on there—but only there, no place else.

... a few of the deaders almost got away. Old Frank Dagget, still two hours away from the heart attack which would carry him off after it was all over and the moon had risen, organized the men into a pair of angled flanks so they wouldn't shoot each other, and for the final ten minutes the Jenny boneyard sounded like Bull Run. By the end of the festivities, the powdersmoke was so thick that some men choked on it. No one puked on it, because no one had anything left to puke up. The sour smell of vomit was almost heavier than the smell of gunsmoke...It was sharper, too, and lingered longer.

And still some wriggled and squirmed like snakes with broken backs. The fresher ones, for the most part.

"Burt," Frank Dagget said. "You got them chainsaws?"

G

It wasn't *that* crazy a notion, not when you gave it time to sink into your already shell-shocked head. Because back in the days when the dead weren't suddenly obliged to stay in their holes and morgue drawers anymore, Monty had found himself wandering the streets. He didn't want much, only to avoid becoming lunch for some newly awakcnd cadaver, and maybe to link up with someone else whose blood still ran warm. And he'd seen the zombies in their homes. There they were—by themselves, in pairs, as entire families—parked in front of their televisions just as before, as if nothing whatsoever had changed. Even when all the networks and independent stations had dropped from the airwaves like fruit from a dying tree, they watched the blank screens anyway. Mesmerized by the static.

The watching dead, waiting to be entertained.

And thus was born the first television program conceived entirely for zombies. I want my ZTV.

Confused? See page 79.

"Drop what you're doing... it'll still be there! Come on! Join us now for the most unpredictable hour on television... DEAAAAAD GIVEAWAAAAAY!"

THEY'RE YOUNG, THEY'VE GOT TALENT, AND THEY'RE DYING TO GET INTO SHOW BUSINESS!

20th CENTURY-FOX presents

STAN GISEA'S

ZOMBIES
on BROADWAY

COLOR BY
TECHNICOLOR

starring
STAN GISEA
and
BUSBY ROMERO
produced by
STAN GISEA
directed by
STAN GISEA
screenplay by
STAN GISEA

ALL SINGING!
ALL DANCING!
ALL DEAD!!

in
CRYPTOVISION

*In 1945, RKO Pictures released **Zombies on Broadway**, a wretched little movie designed to cash in on the then-current zombie craze.*

The picture might just as well not have been made, for the producers failed utterly to fulfill the promise suggested by that wonderful title.

So, if anyone asks, I made it up. —SG

Born a Navy brat, Stan Giesa has since been reared severally as an island waif, flower-child, reluctant suburbanite, and is currently a skulking city-dweller in that bastion of American virtue and culture, Los Angeles.



PROLOGUE. B & W

EXT. CITY. NIGHT. MONTAGE.

From the darkness of the no-doubt urine-drenched Bijou in which this film will inevitably be shown, the screen begins to dart with vaguely defined images. Damp, scummy city streets. Rows and rows of musty, black tenements. Inane neon signs flashing dopily: All Nude. Live Sex Acts. Open All Night. Bob's Beef Hole. The reflection of a particular derelict on the muddy, rain-soaked pavement. The sounds of urban night fill the air. Not-so-distant sirens screaming for help. Barely audible greetings from questionable passers-by. The grunting, slurping, oinking of a sleepless drunk in a nearby storefront.

Before we actually realize it, we discover that we are following one fellow in particular: a sleazy, low-shung, spindly, greasy snake of indeterminate age. On the soundtrack, a slow, lazy saxophone accompanies this oily stranger, E. EDDIE SALES, provocateur, fraud, shyster, the Rufus T. Firefly of the poverty set, and would-be motion-picture producer (hereafter known as EDDIE).

We follow him through the black alleys and well-lit adult book emporia of the metro. We watch as he accosts bystanders with his well-practiced K-Tel approach.

He is, though, a thoroughly determined fellow. No filthy ashcan will go unsearched, no street hustler shall be left uninterviewed in this greaseball's fastidious quest for whatever-the-hell-it-is he's looking for!

Finally, eventually, ultimately, he emerges from some dank, smelly bowling alley, or perhaps some dank, smelly public washroom. He emerges, clutching the object of his quest!

Firmly gripping the PORTFOLIO against the lapel of his never-need-ironing polyester sport coat with dread joy and urgency, he makes a bee-line for home.

Past the all-night beer joint shaped like a chef's cap, past the fat, bloated whore in the gutter wearing a tutu, past the soda-sipping negroes harmonizing beneath the full moon.

"Home" is a disused soundstage in a disused warehouse in very probably the most dangerous section of town.

CUT

TO: INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE

EDDIE falls through the door and to the floor with a stomach-turning THUD!

Far across the warehouse sits NUNCIO DEL TACO, a large, unpleasant man and EDDIE's ostensible partner and friend.

He is lounging with his feet up on the desk, a portable television set astride his formidable and undeniable belly, and chuckling, chortling, guffawing at the antics of Underdog.

EDDIE, picking himself up, dusting himself off; starting all over again, staggers on his spindly, Jerry Lewis legs, to NUNCIO's side, giddy with expectation and vibrant high spirits.

EDDIE
Nuncio. . . ?

ENRICO does not appear to notice him.

A large glob of grease from EDDIE's extremely greasy hair leaks off of his head and onto the end of NUNCIO's prodigious nose, causing him to glance up.

NUNCIO stares up into EDDIE's grinning, apple-doll face.

NUNCIO
Wha. . . ?

As NUNCIO wheels to face him, nostrils flaring, the room suddenly goes BLACK!

CLOSE-UP ON EDDIE as he clicks on a light overhead. Accompanied by a GREAT RECORD OFFER! from the television set now broadcasting from the floor, EDDIE speaks. Smarmy, with a self-congratulatory air, he talks as if he were selling Veg-A-Matics to housewives.

EDDIE

Stand by for an offer you can't afford to miss!

EDDIE spreads the pages of the folio neatly before him on a convenient folding table that seems to have materialized for just that purpose.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Attention, movie-goer! Are you ready? Are you ready for the splendor and wonder of a spectacular, brand-new, motion-picture classic? A monumental blend of pithy erudition and good, old-fashioned fun! That's fun! F-U-N. Fun, fun, fun!

Say it with me, it makes me feel good!

NUNCIO is dull with incomprehension but rapt with attention.

EDDIE (cont'd)

But wait! That's not all—

Are you a gentle, caring, tender, loving person? Do you swoon easily at affairs of the heart? Of course you do! That's called romance, and there's romance aplenty in this delicious, infectious romp for the entire family! So, Mom and Dad, bring along the kids!

NUNCIO, dumbfounded but entranced, stares open-mouthed as EDDIE continues.



EDDIE
(cont'd)

But wait! There's more! Fierce jungle beasts and certain death! And certain death almost always spells adventure! And adventure spells danger! And danger spells suspense! And suspense spells fear! And fear spells excitement! And excitement spells action! And action spells . . . well, I could go on and on.

As he speaks, EDDIE tosses random pages to NUNCIO, reinforcing his spiel.

EDDIE
(cont'd)

But wait! There's still more, unbelievable as it sounds!

NUNCIO's attention intensifies noticeably.

EDDIE
(cont'd)

You like musical extravaganza? You want musical extravaganza? You've got musical extravaganza! Watch as the boy gets the girl! All singing! All dancing! All in frightening Technicolor!

He does a weak little dance step

EDDIE
(cont'd)

Are you ready for an emotional laceration as brutal and uncompromising as life itself? vast in its simplicity, succinct in its complexity. Witty, but not clever. Frank, but never blunt. Superior, but noncondescending. Once again I ask that burning question. Are you ready?

NUNCIO, sweating now, the pages of the folio fluttering around him, bursts with anticipated delight.

NUNCIO

I'm ready! I'm ready, already!



NUNCIO
(cont'd)

Take me! Take me to see this
masterpiece, this monument!

EDDIE
Document.

NUNCIO
Eh?

EDDIE
Don't you see, Enrico? This
is the raw material from which
skillful hands, your skillful
hands, might fashion a
masterpiece worthy of my praise!

NUNCIO
Document?

The television set is playing "The Star-
Spangled Banner."

EDDIE
Oh, they sneered when you
courageously defied convention
and made "The Betty Crocker Story."
They laughed cold-hearted when you
made "Revenge of The Flying Nun."
They really laughed when you made
"Adolf Hitler's Adventures in
Outer Space"! But now, finally,
you can put all those bitter
failures behind you! You must
make this picture! And they
won't laugh any more when we're
smoking 250-dollar cigars and
wearing two-dollar suits!

NUNCIO is getting a bit misty, what with
"The Star-Spangled Banner" and all.

NUNCIO
250-dollar cigars. . . ?

EDDIE takes NUNCIO's arm and they
waltz around the room. EDDIE pircou-
ettes, NUNCIO catches him.

NUNCIO
I'll do it!

(slaps his belly for emphasis)
No more long nights spent in
humble solitude. All bitterness
behind me! "Forge ahead," the
new buzz words! No longer the

brunt of my peers' jeers! Look
out, world, Enrico Kodak is back
from the dead!—

Uh, what's this picture called,
anyway?

EDDIE
Never mind. It's a sure-fire hit!
Sure-fire.

From the television set, a long, static
TONE and a TEST PATTERN.



SMASH CUT TO:

END PROLOGUE. END B & W.

EXT. CIT. DAY. MONTAGE. CREDITS.

The screen erupts with **COLOR** and **MU-
SIC**! Seen at gutter level, the hustle and
bustle of a busy metropolitan street,
resembling nothing so much as a very
similar street in "Guys & Dolls"!

ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY is emblazoned
across the screen in glorious High-Techni-
color! The **MUSIC** is loud, rhythmic, and
danceable. A chorus of crystal-clear
voices sings the **TITLE TUNE**.

CHORUS (V.O., singing)
We're Zombies on Broadway,
We're makin' the grade,
Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed,
Only slightly decayed!

Zombies on Broadway,
Like Ginger and Fred,
We're giving our all,
And we're knockin' 'em dead!

We'll walk on burning coals for you!
Jump in boiling oil for you!
Sever several limbs for you!
Sing a gospel hymn for you!
Gladly bump and grind for you!

SOLO VOICE (V.O., singing)
I'll peel away the rind for you!

CHORUS (V.O., singing)
With taps on our shoes,
And a crease in our pants,
Nobody can use us
To fertilize plants!

We're Zombies on Broadway,
No longer underground!
We're the living dead,
And we're Broadway Bound!

As the CREDITS ROLL, the camera pans leisurely along the crowded thoroughfare: a dog's-eye view, if you will. Dozens of pairs of feet shuffle busily along. Perhaps one or two pair of feet begin to feel the rhythm of the MUSIC, tapping, soft-shoeing, standing on toe. Occasionally, a pair of lumbering ZOMBIE FEET strolls across the screen.

As the CREDITS CONTINUE, the dance steps become more and more intricate and obviously choreographed, as does the movement of the camera. Some take partners, creating more diverse steps, more interesting and subtle movements. The camera pans swiftly along with the seemingly endless parade of feet. Before long, it is apparent that a great many pairs of feet are standing in a very long, unbelievably long, line. Not only that, but the style of footwear has gotten ever more bizarre and colorful. High heels with mesh stockings, roller skates, stilts, brightly-checked sneakers, elfin booties, bare feet, patent-leather tap shoes, springs, hooves, claws, Martian Astro-slippers, pink plastic rhinestone-encrusted

pumps—the list goes on and on.

As the CREDITS END, the CAMERA PULLS DISCREETLY BACK to reveal the front of the line disappearing into the lobby of a swank, downtown theatre. A gaudy, hand-made banner nailed above the door loudly proclaims:

AUDITIONS TODAY! ZOMBIES ONLY!
For a bold, new Broadway revue!

The turnout is huge. The line outside the theatre is immeasurably long, and chock-full of the motliest assortment of Broadway hopefuls ever to tap a toe. Flamenco dancers, sword swallows, baton twirlers, lounge singers, fire-breathers, ventriloquists, Elvis impersonators, the cast of "Up With People," some who think they're standing in line for "E.T.," all hoping for their "big break."

Not an actual zombie in the bunch.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE. ONSTAGE.

Inside the theatre, POP, a stage manager, is shouting instructions to the crowd milling onstage.

POP

Everybody listen up! We're only seeing singing zombies and dancing zombies today! If you do not sing or dance, please leave the theatre!— If you are not currently deceased, please leave the theatre! I repeat, if you are not—hey! Brian, check that guy for a pulse, huh!

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE. ORCHESTRA SEATING. Seated in the otherwise empty house, DAVID BAGELMAN (hereafter known as BAGELMAN 1) and DAVID BAGELMAN (hereafter known as BAGELMAN 2) are watching the hubbub onstage with professional consternation. Balding, fiftyish (like Edward G. Robinson in "Soylent Green"), they are identically dressed in

expensive but tasteless attire. They puff furiously on twin Cuban cigars, engulfed in twin clouds of smoke, squinting through thick, convex twin spectacles. (Ideally, both roles should be played by the same actor.) The tension between them is almost palpable.

BAGELMAN 2
(barely audible)
Stupid.

BAGELMAN 1
Yes! A stupid idea, yes! You're right, yes!— But can't you see, that's the beauty of it! It's so stupid, nobody's ever done it before!

He beams with self-satisfaction. BAGELMAN 2 glares at him, drumming his fingers impatiently.

BAGELMAN 2
Stupid, even for us.

POP (O.S.)
Okay! Let's get this freak show on the road!

CUT TO:
INT. THEATRE. ONSTAGE. AUDITION SEQUENCE.

The house lights dim. The auditions begin.

A sweet, pretty LITTLE GIRL IN CURLS enters, her proud parents hovering close behind her, doting. She tap-dances and sings "Animal Crackers" in a rather fair imitation of Shirley Temple. She finishes big and MOM & DAD applaud wildly.

BAGELMAN 1
Very good, very good.

MOM & DAD
Thank you!

BAGELMAN 1
But . . . um . . . she's not dead . . . is she?

MOM & DAD
Well . . . er . . . no, actually . . . but . . . we'd be willing to kill her!

POP
Next!

A ONE-ARMED MAN in a wheelchair rolls in, juggles mannequin limbs, and sings "I Got Plenty O' Nothin'" in a beautiful basso voice.

BAGELMAN 1
Are you currently living in New York city?

ONE-ARMED JUGGLER
Yes, sir.

POP
Next!

A man in a PIG SUIT enters. He removes his head and speaks to the house.

PIG SUIT
Thank you. I'm going to sing for you a little song I've written myself entitled "You Really Know How to Fry that Bacon, Baby."

He replaces his head. His MUSIC begins, but before he can utter a note. . .

POP
Next!

MERV GRIFFIN enters and tries to sing "I've Got A Lovely Bunch O' Coconuts." He gets four bars.

POP & BOTH BAGELMANS
Next!

(TO BE CONTINUED)







Not
From

DETROIT

BY
JOE
LANSDALE

Outside it was cold and wet and windy. The storm rattled the shack, slid like razor blades through the window, door and wall cracks, but it wasn't enough to make any difference to the couple. Sitting before the crumbling fireplace in their creaking rocking chairs, shawls across their knees, fingers entwined, they were warm.

A bucket behind them near the kitchen sink collected water dripping from a hole in the roof. The drops had long since passed the noisy stage of sounding like steel bolts falling on tin, and were now gentle plops.

The old couple were husband and wife; had been for over fifty years. They were comfortable with one another and seldom spoke. Mostly they rocked and looked at the fire as it flickered shadows across the room.

Finally Margie spoke. "Alex," she said. "I hope I die before you."

Alex stopped rocking. "Did you say what I thought you did?"

"I said, I hope I die before you." She wouldn't look at him, just the fire. "It's selfish, I know, but I hope I do. I don't want to live on with you gone. It would be like cutting out my heart and making me walk around. Like one of them zombies."

J O E L A N S D A L E

"There are the children," he said. "If I died, they'd take you in."

"I'd just be in the way. I love them, but I don't want to do that. They got their own lives. I'd just as soon die before you. That would make things simple."

"Not simple for me," Alex said. "I don't want you to die before me. So how about that? We're both selfish, aren't we?"

She smiled thinly. "Well, it ain't a thing to talk about before bedtime, but it's been on my mind, and I had to get it out."

"Been thinking on it too, honcy. Only natural we would. We ain't spring chickens anymore."

"You're healthy as a horse, Alex Brooks. Mechanic work you did all your life kept you strong. Me, I got the bursitis and the miseries and I'm tired all the time. Got the old age bad."

Alex started rocking again. They stared into the fire. "We're going to go together, hon," he said. "I feel it. That's the way it ought to be for folks like us."

"I wonder if I'll see him coming. Death, I mean."

"What?"

"My grandma used to tell me she seen him the night her daddy died."

"You've never told me this."

"Ain't a subject I like. But grandma said this man in a black buggy slowed down out front of their house, cracked his whip three times, and her daddy was gone in instants. And she said she'd heard her grandfather tell how he had seen Death when he was a boy. Told her it was early morning and he was up, about to start his chores, and when he went outside he seen this man dressed in black walk by the house and stop out front. He was carrying a stick over his shoulder with a checkered bundle tied to it, and he looked at the house and snapped his fingers three times. A moment later they found my great-grandfather's brother, who had been sick with the smallpox, dead in bed."

"Stories, hon. Stories. Don't get yourself worked up over a bunch of old tall tales. Here, I'll heat us some milk."

Alex stood, laid the shawl in the chair, went over to put milk in a pan and heat it. As he did, he turned to watch Margie's back. She was still staring into the fire, only she wasn't rocking. She was just watching the blaze, and Alex knew, thinking about dying.

After the milk they went to bed, and soon Margie was asleep, snoring like a busted chainsaw. Alex found he could not rest. It was partly due to the storm, it had picked up in intensity. But it was mostly because of what Margie had said about dying. It made him feel lonesome.

Like her, he wasn't so much afraid of dying, as he was of being left alone. She had been his heartbeat for fifty years, and without her, he would only be going through motions of life, not living.

God, he prayed silently. When we go, let us go together. He turned to look at Margie. Her face looked unlined and strangely young. He was glad she could turn off most anything with sleep. He, on the other hand, could not.

Maybe I'm just hungry.

He slid out of bed, pulled on his pants, shirt and house shoes; those silly things with the rabbit face and ears his granddaughter had bought him. He padded silently to the kitchen. It was not only the kitchen, it served as den, living room and dining room. The house was only three rooms and a closet, and one of the rooms was a small bathroom. It was times like this that Alex thought he could have done better by Margie. Gotten her a bigger house, for one thing. It was the same house where they had raised their kids, the babies sleeping in a crib here in the kitchen.

He sighed. No matter how hard he had worked, he seemed to stay in the same place. A poor place.

He went to the refrigerator and took out a half-gallon of milk, drank directly from the carton.

He put the carton back and watched the water drip into the bucket. It made him mad to see it. He had let the little house turn into a shack since he retired, and there was no real excuse for it. Surely, he wasn't that tired. It was a wonder Margie didn't complain more.

Well, there was nothing to do about it tonight. But he vowed that when dry weather came, he wouldn't forget about it this time. He'd get up there and fix that damn leak.

Quietly, he rummaged a pan from under the cabinet. He'd have to empty the bucket now if he didn't want it to run over before morning. He ran a little water into the pan before substituting it for the bucket so the drops wouldn't sound so loud.

He opened the front door, went out on the porch, carrying the bucket. He looked out at his mud-pie yard and his old, red wrecker, his white logo on the side of the door faded with time: ALEX BROOKS WRECKING AND MECHANIC SERVICE.

Tonight, looking at the old warhorse, he felt sadder than ever. He missed using it the way it was meant to be used. For work. Now it was nothing more than transportation. Before he retired, his tools and hands made a living. Now nothing. Picking up a Social Security Check was all that was left.

Leaning over the edge of the porch, he poured the water into the bare and empty flower bed. When he lifted his head and looked at his yard again, and beyond Highway 59, he saw a light. Headlights, actually, looking fuzzy in the rain, like filmed-over amber eyes. They were way out there on the highway, coming from the South, winding their way toward him, moving fast.

Alex thought that whoever was driving that crate was crazy. Cruising like that on bone-dry highways with plenty of sunshine would have been dangerous, but in this weather, they were asking for a crackup.

As the car neared, he could see it was long, black and strangely-shaped. He'd never seen anything like it, and he knew cars fairly well. This didn't look like something off the assembly line from Detroit. It had to be foreign.

Miraculously, the car slowed without so much as a quiver or a screech of brakes and tires. In fact, Alex could not even hear its motor, just the faint whispering of rubber on wet cement.

The car came even of the house just as lightning flashed,

J O E L A N S D A L E

and in that instant, Alex got a good look at the driver, or at least the shape of the driver outlined in the flash, and he saw that it was a man with a cigar in his mouth and a bowler hat on his head. And the head was turning toward the house.

The lightning flashed died, and now there was only the dark shape of the car and the red tip of the cigar jutting at the house. Alex felt stalactites of ice dripping down from the roof of his skull, extended through his body and out the soles of his feet.

The driver hit down on his horn; three sharp blasts that pricked at Alex's mind.

Honk. (visions of blooming roses, withering going black)

Honk. (funerals remembered, loved ones in boxes, going down)

Honk. (worms crawling through rotten flesh)

Then came a silence louder than the horn blasts. The car picked up speed again. Alex watched as its taillights winked away in the blackness. The chill became less chill. The stalactites in his brain and mind melted away.

But as he stood there, Margie's words of earlier that evening came at him in a rush: "Seen Death once... buggy slowed down out front...cracked his whip *three times*...man looked at the house, snapped his fingers *three times*...found dead a moment later..."

Alex's throat felt as if a pine knot had lodged there. The bucket slipped from his fingers, clattered on the porch and rolled into the flowerbed. He turned into the house and walked briskly toward the bedroom.

(Can't be, just a wife's tale)
his hands vibrating with fear.

(Just a crazy coincidence)
Margie wasn't snoring.

Alex grabbed her shoulder, shook her.

Nothing.

He rolled her on her back and screamed her name.

Nothing.

"Oh, baby. No."

He felt for her pulse.

None.

He put an ear to her chest, listening for a heartbeat (the other half of his life bongos), and there was none.

Quiet. Perfectly quiet.

"You can't..." Alex said. "You can't..." We're supposed to go together... Got to be that way."

And then it came to him. He had *seen* Death drive by, had *seen* him heading on down the highway.

He came to his feet, snatched his coat from the back of the chair, raced toward the front door. "You won't have her," he said aloud. "You won't."

Grabbing the wrecker keys from the nail beside the door, he leaped to the porch and dashed out into the cold and the rain.

A moment later he was heading down the highway, driving fast and crazy in pursuit of the strange car.

The wrecker was old and not built for speed, but since he kept it well tuned and it had new tires, it ran well over the wet highway. Alex kept pushing the pedal gradually until it met the floor. Faster and faster and faster.

After an hour, he saw Death.

Not the man himself but the license plate. Personalized and clear in his headlights. It read: DEATH/EXEMPT.

The wrecker and the strange black car were the only ones on the road. Alex closed in on him, honked his horn. Death tooted back (not the same horn sound he had given in front of Alex's house), stuck his arm out the window and waved the wrecker around.

Alex went, and when he was alongside the car, he turned his head to look at Death. He could still not see him clearly, but he could make out the shape of his bowler, and when Death turned to look at him, he could see the glowing tip of the cigar, like a bloody bullet wound.

Alex whipped hard right into the car, and Death swerved to the right, then back onto the road. Alex rammed again. The black car's tires hit roadside gravel and Alex swung closer, preventing it from returning to the highway. He rammed yet another time, and the car went into the grass alongside the road, skidded and went sailing down an embankment and into a tree.

Alex braked carefully, backed off the road and got out of the wrecker. He reached a small pipe wrench and a big crescent wrench out from under the seat, slipped the pipe wrench into his coat pocket for insurance, then went charging down the embankment waving the crescent.

Death opened his door and stepped out. The rain had subsided and the moon was peeking through the clouds like a shy child through gossamer curtains. Its light hit Death's round, pink face and made it look like a waxed pomegranate. His cigar hung from his mouth by a tobacco strand.

Glancing up the embankment, he was an old, but strong-looking black man brandishing a wrench and wearing bunny slippers, charging down at him.

Spitting out the ruined cigar, Death stepped forward, grabbed Alex's wrist and forearm, twisted. The old man went up and over, the wrench went flying from his hand. Alex came down hard on his back, the breath bursting out of him in spurts.

Death leaned over Alex. Up close, Alex could see that the pink face was slightly pocked and that some of the pinkness was due to makeup. That was rich. Death was vain about his appearance. He was wearing a black tee-shirt, pants and sneakers, and of course his derby, which had neither been stirred by the wreck or by the ju-jitsu maneuver.

"What's with you, man?" Death asked.

Alex wheezed, tried to catch his breath. "You... can't...have...her."

"Who? What are you talking about?"

"Don't play...dumb with me." Alex raised up on one elbow, his wind returning. "You're Death and you took my Margie's soul."

Death straightened. "So you know who I am. All right. But what of it? I'm only doing my job."

"It ain't her time."

"My list says it is, and my list is never wrong."

Alex felt something hard pressing against his hip, realized what it was. The pipe wrench. Even the throw Death had put on him had not hurled it from his coat pocket. It had lodged there

J O E L A N S D A L E

and the pocket had shifted beneath his hip, making his old bones hurt all the worse.

Alex made as to roll over, freed the pocket beneath him, shot his hand inside and produced the pipe wrench. He hurled it at Death, struck him just below the brim of the bowler and sent him stumbling back. This time the bowler fell off. Death's forehead was bleeding.

Before Death could collect himself, Alex was up and rushing. He used his head as a battering ram and struck Death in the stomach, knocking him to the ground. He put both knees on Death's arms, pinning them, clenched his throat with his strong, old hands.

"I ain't never hurt nobody before," Alex said. "Don't want to now. I didn't want to hit you with that wrench, but you give Margie back."

Death's eyes showed no expression at first, but slowly a light seemed to go on behind them. He easily pulled his arms out from under Alex's knees, reached up, took hold of the old man's wrist and pulled the hands away from his throat.

"You old rascal," Death said. "You outsmarted me."

Death flopped Alex over on his side, then stood up to once more lord over the man. Grinning, he turned, stooped to recover his bowler, but he never laid a hand on it.

Alex moved like a crab, scissored his legs and caught Death above and behind the knees, twisted, brought him down on his face.

Death raised up on his palms and crawled from behind Alex's legs like a snake, effortlessly. This time he grabbed the hat and put it on his head and stood up. He watched Alex carefully.

"I don't frighten you much, do I?" Death asked.

Alex noted that the wound on Death's forehead had vanished. There wasn't even a drop of blood. "No," Alex said. "You don't frighten me much. I just want my Margie back."

"All right," Death said.

Alex sat bolt upright.

"What?"

"I said, all right. For a time. Not many have outsmarted me, pinned me to the ground. I give you credit, and you've got courage. I like that. I'll give her back. For a time. Come here."

Death walked over to the car that was not from Detroit. Alex got to his feet and followed. Death took the keys out of the ignition, moved to the trunk, worked the key in the lock. It popped up with a hiss.

Inside were stacks and stacks of match boxes. Death moved his hand over them, like a careful man selecting a special vegetable at the supermarket. His fingers came to rest on a matchbox that looked to Alex no different than the others.

Death handed Alex the matchbox. "Her soul's in here, old man. You stand over her bed, open the box. Okay?"

"That's it?"

"That's it. Now get out of here before I change my mind. And remember, I'm giving her back to you. But just for a while."

Alex started away, holding the matchbox carefully. As he walked past Death's car, he saw the dents he had knocked in the side with his wrecker were popping out. He turned to look at Death, who was closing the trunk.

"Don't suppose you'll need a tow out of here?"

Death smiled thinly. "Not hardly."

Alex stood over their bed; the bed where they had loved, slept, talked and dreamed. He stood there with the matchbox in his hand, his eyes on Margie's cold face. He ever so gently eased the box open. A small flash of blue light, like Peter Pan's friend Tinkerbell, rushed out of it and hit Margie's lips. She made a sharp inhaling sound and her chest rose. Her eyes came open. She turned and looked at Alex and smiled.

"My lands, Alex. What are you doing there, and half-dressed? What you been up to...is that a matchbox?"

Alex tried to speak, but he found he could not. All he could do was grin.

"Have you gone nuts?" she asked.

"Maybe a little." He sat down on the bed and took her hand. "I love you Margie."

"And I love you... You been drinking?"

"No."

Then came the overwhelming sound of Death's horn. One harsh blast that shook the house, and the headbeams shone brightly through the window and the cracks and lit up the shack like a cheap nightclub act.

"Who in the world?" Margie asked.

"Him. But he said... Stay here."

Alex got his shotgun out of the closet. He went out on the porch. Death's car was pointed toward the house, and the headbeams seemed to hold Alex, like a fly in butter.

Death was standing on the bottom porch step, waiting.

Alex pointed the shotgun at him. "You git. You gave her back. You gave your word."

J O E L A N S D A L E

"And I kept it. But I said for a while."

"That wasn't any time at all."

"It was all I could give. My present."

"Short time like that's worse than no time at all."

"Be good about it, Alex. Let her go. I got records and they have to be kept. I'm going to take her anyway, you understand that?"

"Not tonight, you ain't." Alex pulled back the hammers on the shotgun. "Not tomorrow night neither. Not anytime soon."

"That gun won't do you any good, Alex. You know that. You can't stop Death. I can stand here and snap my fingers three times, or click my tongue, or go back to the car and honk my horn, and she's as good as mine. But I'm trying to reason with you, Alex. You're a brave man. I did you a favor because you bested me. I didn't want to just take her back without telling you. That's why I came here to talk. But she's got to go. Now."

Alex lowered the shotgun. "Can't...can't you take me in her place? You can do that can't you?"

"I...I don't know. It's highly irregular."

"Yeah, you can do that. Take me. Leave Margie."

"Well, I suppose."

The screen door creaked open and Margie stood there in her housecoat. "You're forgetting, Alex, I don't want to be left alone."

"Go in the house, Margie," Alex said.

"I know who this is. I heard you talking, Mr. Death, I don't want you taking my Alex. I'm the one you came for. I ought to have the right to go."

There was a pause, no one speaking. Then Alex said, "Take both of us. You can do that, can't you? I know I'm on that list of yours, and pretty high up. Man my age couldn't have too many years left. You can take me a little before my time, can't you? Well, can't you?"

Margie and Alex sat in their rocking chairs, their shawls over their knees. There was no fire in the fireplace. Behind them the bucket collected water and outside the wind whistled. They held hands. Death stood in front of them. He was holding a King Edward cigar box.

"You're sure of this?" Death asked. "You don't both have to go."

Alex looked at Margie, then back at Death.

"We're sure," he said. "Do it."

Death nodded. He opened the cigar box and held it out on one palm. He used his free hand to snap his fingers.

Once. *(the wind picked up, howled.)*

Twice. *(the rain beat like drumsticks on the roof)*

Three times. *(lightning ripped and thunder roared)*

"And in you go," Death said.

A little blue light came out of the couple's mouths and jetted into the cigar box with a thump, and Death closed the lid.

The bodies of Alex and Margie slumped and their heads fell together between the rocking chairs. Their fingers were still entwined.

Death put the box under his arm and went out to the car. The rain beat on his derby hat and the wind sawed at his bare arms and tee-shirt. He didn't seem to mind.

Opening the trunk, he started to put the box inside, then hesitated.

He closed the trunk.

"Damn," he said, "if I'm not getting to be a sentimental old fool."

He opened the box. Two blue lights rose out of it, elongated, touched ground. They took on the shape of Alex and Margie. They glowed against the night.

"Want to ride up front?" Death asked.

"That would be nice," Margie said.

"Yes, nice," Alex said.

Death opened the door and Alex and Margie slid inside. Death climbed in behind the wheel. He checked the clipboard dangling from the dash. There was a woman in a Tyler hospital, dying of brain damage. That would be his next stop.

He put the clipboard down and started the car that was not from Detroit.

"Sounds well-tuned," Alex said.

"I try to keep it that way," Death said.

They drove out of there then, and as they went, Death broke into song. "Row, row row your boat, gently down the stream," and Margie and Alex chimed in with, "Merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream."

Off they went down the highway, the taillights fading, the song dying, the black metal of the car melting into the fabric of night, and then there was only the whispery sound of good tires on wet cement and finally not even that. Just the blowing sound of the wind and the rain.

(With thanks to Richard Matheson and Richard Christian Matheson)



Joe Lansdale is one of the Lone Star state's brightest and best. Joe has also contributed to Book of the Dead and Silver Screen, and leads a secret life as a Western storyteller.

TED STURGEON



The Last Interview



B Y P A U L S A M M O N

After all these years, I still ask myself—did I really like him?

Of course, it was impossible not to love Ted Sturgeon. I mean, love was the man's ongoing theme; who was I to resist such a thesis? And Ted himself was never less than gentle, and gracious, and a conversational joy.

Still...I was never sure I liked him.

This ambiguity partly sprang from my own sense of self. Or lack of it. I was younger then, more open and insecure, qualities now scoured away by ten years in the film business. Still, granting my own shortcomings, I'm convinced that the man himself was partly to blame. I never completely relaxed around him. Despite his warmth and apparent acceptance, there was a deep, hard pocket somewhere in Sturgeon's soul, a very private place where only a few were invited.

Maybe he didn't want to be part of my dream. Back in 1976, I had a dream. As a lover of horror, biography and film, it occurred to me that no one had put the three together. Not in any coherent, historical sense. Recall the era now; there was no Star Wars, Stephen King was just taking off, and the literary explosion of science fiction was somewhere down the block.

So where, I mused, were those books on the Titans of the Fantastic, the people who'd toiled both in print and film to construct new worlds and new nightmares? Who would write such a thing?

Smiling, I had my dream; I would. I'd assemble a book blending personality and horror and movies. I'd call it (knowingly and unashamedly), A Sense of Wonder. I'd produce an academic's wet dream, a

monster project extensively detailing the personal lives of that handful of horror/science fiction writers who not only wrote fiction but scenarios and teleplays as well. Then, as a capper, I'd couple these oral histories with exhaustive bibliographies and filmographies.

And I did. You never saw it, but I did.

More on this later.

The subjects of *A Sense of Wonder* were limited to five men, men I really cared about. Men whose fiction and screenplays had enraptured and enriched and enthralled me. Men like Richard Matheson and Harlan Ellison; Robert Bloch, and Forry Ackerman (the joker in the pack).

Men like Theodore Sturgeon.

In the mid-seventies, I viewed Ted as a Fallen God. The same man who had created such transgenic masterpieces as *More Than Human* and "The Professor's Teddy Bear" was, went the dark rumors, suffering a crippling writer's block.

Never a prolific writer, Sturgeon's output in the last few decades of his life was quite small. Despite such award-winning work as "Slow Sculpture," most of Sturgeon's efforts during this period produced relative trifles. Like the computational puzzle "Agnes Access and Accent," or the hard-core porn fantasy "In the Country Of" (about the pacification of a militarist through megavitamin therapy and serious sex—believe me, Theodore Sturgeon was serious about sex).

Clearly, by 1974 (when we first met), Sturgeon's reputation lay behind him. But on what a body of work! Anyone who knows anything about horror/fantasy/science fiction knows Sturgeon as one of the masters; anyone who knows anything about Literature (yes, with a capital L) knows Sturgeon as one of the great twentieth-century authors. His art was penetrating, mature and totally individualistic. Theodore Sturgeon was not only an incredible stylist, he could dive deep into the complex currents of human emotion and personality. Invariably, he'd resurface holding a glittering, absolutely genuine shard of empathic insight.

Not only that, he'd written for TV and the movies.

So in the summer of 1977, armed with a tape recorder and backed by months of research (not to mention a book contract and fat advance; yes, my dream had crystallized), I tracked Ted Sturgeon down. This was not a hard thing, since we were both living in San Diego.

Two full years of talking, partying—and quarreling—were about to begin.

In this excerpt from A Sense of Wonder, Theodore Sturgeon discusses his early life and formative influences.

Why don't we begin with your family background?

Well, I was born a Waldo on February 26, 1918, in Staten Island, New York, and became a Sturgeon later on in life.

How did that come about?

Originally I was named Edward Hamilton Waldo. Then my parents divorced in 1927, and in 1929 my mother remarried, and my stepfather was a Sturgeon. I'd always wanted to be called Ted as a kid, I guess, so when they had me baptized I was renamed Theodore Hamilton Sturgeon.

But the Waldos are a very interesting clan. Very briefly: Peter Waldo was a Piedmontese of the 15th or 16th Century, and a priest. And he had this stupid idea that the Pope ought to go back to Apostolic Christianity, go barefoot with a bowl and go

around helping the sick. The Pope, who liked his Swiss Guards and his gold-encrusted Jesus, took a very dim view of the whole thing and called Peter Waldo a heretic. And for two hundred years the Waldenses were persecuted all across Europe. A lot of them were burned, put under piles of rocks and things like that.

They finally settled in the low countries of Flanders, which is now Holland and Belgium. A lot of them went to England. They were thrifty, hard-working people, and gurus, all of them. They were teachers; it was just in their old blood. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of them.

In 1640, twenty years after the Mayflower, two shiploads of Waldenses left for the New World. One of them landed in Connecticut. There are Waldos there to this day. The other ship was blown very far south in a storm, and wound up in Hispanola. Hispanola was, at that time—and became much more so later—a refuge for escaped slaves. There was already a black population, as well as an Indian population—Arrawaks, and so on.

When these Hispanolans found out that they had a shipload of dissident priests aboard, they were thrilled, and welcomed

them. And these priests became part of their whole ritual. This accounts for the injection of Christian ritual into the African rituals of Haiti. And "Waldo" became corrupted to *Vaudois*, which later became corrupted into *voodoo*. That's the etymology of the word "voodoo." It came from Peter Waldo and the *Piedmontese* two centuries earlier.

My mother was a Canadian. Her parents were English. My grandfather was the rector of Saint Mary's Upchurch in Kent. Remember the song, "The Bells of St. Mary's"? Well, that was the church it was written about. Her uncle was the Archbishop of the West Indies, her grandfather was the Bishop of Quebec. So it was a Church of England family from 'way back. There were seventeen ministers in the two families. They wanted me to get into the Church, too, but I had had too close a connection with its internal workings. There were some things that had happened that I, as a teenager, just couldn't cut. I just couldn't hang on to it.

I have now come to believe in what I call *tholcpsis*—it's a Greek word, means "sized of God." That is to say, a direct communication between yourself and what your God is as an entity. It just doesn't have to go through channels. Men will worship, I acknowledge this. If you take the temples away from them, they will worship a Babel or rip the buttons off Captain Kirk, but worship they do. They are now worshipping science, which is a wonderful surrogate for the temple. But they have to go through channels. This is the only way the Church, as a secular organization, can make a buck. Otherwise, the Churches couldn't—



Seem to be pious while retaining their power.

That's right. Therefore, they dissuade people from having a direct connection with the Deity. Which actually makes them an anti-worship organization, which is an interesting position.

Church as anti-Christ?

Or anti-God, even. This is why so many of the churches don't permit speaking in tongues or religious ecstasies, and so on.

You know, during a service a collection is taken up. The ushers bring the money up to the priest, and the priest or the minister takes it and turns his back on the congregation—a very significant thing—and then holds out all this material over the altar. Now, that's money, and they call it an analogue of worship. He takes the worship from the congregation and through himself gives it to God. But only through him.

And I've often been tempted to stand up at that moment, pass the priest, walk up to the altar, and slap a hundred-dollar bill down on it. It would create a very interesting situation, 'cause he'd want my hundred-dollar bill, but I wouldn't have done it the right way. I think that illustrates exactly how I feel about it. I want my hundred-dollar bills to go to God. I want my sense of worship, whatever it is, to go directly to whatever I consider a deity. Which I'm not going to go into right now, because it's...[laughs] But I don't want it to go through channels, buy chancellors or stained glass or stuff like that. Because I don't think that's the function of either my dollars or my worship.

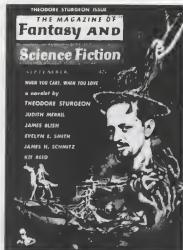
I got back into it when I lived in Rockland County, in Woodstock, New York, and began to send my kids to church. Largely because I wanted to sleep late on Sunday mornings. So I sent them to Sunday School. It was also the only church around where they didn't have to cross the street to get to it—which was, perhaps, a questionable reason to put children into church.

I had another reason, too, which was very cold-blooded: I knew that, as they grew up and turned into teenagers, they'd rebel, and I wanted an interface. I wanted to give them something to rebel against before they started rebelling against me. That was a very cold-blooded thing to do.

However, the minister there was one of the finest human beings I've ever met in my whole life. For quite a long time, for some number of years, I was very deeply involved in that Church because of him. But later on I got into a terrible, terrible personal crisis. I was ready to jump off the edge. So I turned to the Church to see if it could be of any help to me. And all I got was commercials: "Bring it to Jesus." Not only your problems, but also your money. A whole series of commercials.

Have you ever seen the Gideon Bible? It says, "When in financial trouble, in trouble of health, etc., turn to page such and such." And every single one of those pages is a commercial. "Just turn to the Church. drop all your problems. Don't try to solve them. Let Jesus solve your problems. Become a faithful member of the Church and all your problems will be solved."

That Gideon Bible, I think, turned me away from the Church permanently and forever. At a time of really desperate crisis I did not need commercials, I needed help, and I didn't get



it. I'm afraid it even turned me away from my good friend the minister in Woodstock. It was too great a blow. The one place I felt I could turn to was of no help to me, no help at all.

You were saying that your mother's family was of the Church of England?

Yeah. She was born in Canada, of English extraction. My father married her when she was sixteen. He first saw her when she was fourteen, and then determined to marry her. He went to England and snatched her up. She was a very strong-minded and rebellious person as a teenager, and she wanted out. And here's a suitor who wants to marry her who's twice her age. But it doesn't matter. It was a ticket out, so she took it.

And it was a miserable marriage. He was in the paint business, a real American businessman who wanted a wife who would entertain, learn to paint and varnish people. Be nice to anybody who would be of any good to the firm. Now, she was artistic and musical, and just didn't know how to do his sort of thing. She just didn't know how to manage. She also didn't know how to manage money. She didn't know how to run a household. She was just lost in this situation. So things became very bad between them.

She had two children before she was eighteen, one right after the other. My brother Peter is about fifteen months older than I am. And the prospect of having any more was just terrifying to her, which probably made her not a particularly warm companion. My father's attitude was that she just ought to breed like a fly. His parents had. He used to say that his mother had had eight children and seven miscarriages before she was thirty-five. That was a matter of pride with him. She was also paralyzed from the waist down from the time she was thirty-five, and died fairly early. Which he didn't seem to make a connection with. To him, she was a good woman doing the right thing. His attitude was very typical of the American businessman of the period, that is, the late Teens and early Twenties.

I remember once he went away on a business trip, and came back to find that our mother had been teaching us French. He says, "French? French? What do you want to do—make sissies out of the boys?" So you can see the whole matrix of the times. Yet he was a very kind, generous man, who was sterling

honest. His word was his bond. But he ultimately went bankrupt in the Thirties. He was very easily cheated by some people who were working for him. He had a factory and paint business down in Maryland and was cheated because he was absolutely naive. He just didn't think people would do dishonest things. Every time he saw something rotten coming up it was a matter of bewilderment to him. His way of handling it was to just write these people out of the human race and not deal with them anymore. Which is really not the way to succeed in business. His thought of business success was to have an excellent product at the lowest possible price, and to always keep his promises. And that's not really a key to getting along in this world.

He died of Parkinson's disease which was just too bad. He lived until he was seventy-two. Parkinson's took him seven years to die of, and every day was going to be worse than the day before. He was ultimately reduced to a quivering jelly in front of a television set, which is not the nicest way in the world to go.

My mother died of a complexity of diseases. One of the problems was malnutrition. She was living in the West Indies, being fed fried foods all the time, and the doctors came up with the fact that her disintegration was probably due to a massive B-complex deficiency that had been going on since the late 1930's. She had all her teeth pulled out, and had them replaced only with uppers. She was never able to chew anything again, except mush and fried stuff, and ultimately she just came apart. Her eyes, for one thing, had cataracts in them. Her sense of balance went; she just came unglued very rapidly in about eighteen months. She died when she was about sixty-two. A lovely lady. There was a lot wrong with her as far as her practicality was concerned, but I think she did a lot of good for a lot of people. She was a teacher, you know. Taught English and Drama in the West Indies.

My stepfather, who I met when I was ten, was a Scotch-Presbyterian. He was brilliantly intelligent. At the time the only intelligence tests around were the Army Alpha Tests, which were used to grade intellect for the Army during World War I. It consisted of 214 questions with right/wrong answers. And there was no way to compute his intelligence, because he had 212 right.

He was also conversant in seven languages, and was head of the Romance Languages at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia. Taught French, and Spanish, and technical German. He had been a math major in college; however, somebody else graduated Summa Cum Laude. My stepfather was only second by some fraction of a point. But because of that, because he wasn't the best, he turned to languages, which he happened to be very good at. I mean, a small thing like that turned his whole life around.

My stepfather was a perfectionist. When he met my mother, he was aware that she had two very intelligent children, and he had his pipe-dreams about turning them into Rhodes scholars. It only took him about a year to discover that we weren't ever going to be Rhodes scholars, because our whole attitude toward work and toward school wasn't suitable for that, and couldn't be. So he swung completely around the other way



and ceased to have any further interest in us at all. That is, excepting to do his duty by us as a father. His main interest was my mother, and in getting us out of the nest. His impact on me was so great, it affected the rest of my life so much, that it really was with a great deal of surprise that I realized he'd only been in my life for five years. And yet between the time I was ten and the time I ran away from home, a lot of things happened. Among them was the fact that he turned me into a science fiction writer.

It sounds as if that may have been an inverted accomplishment. How'd he achieve that?

I had a tremendous academic background. I'm a high-school drop-out, by the way, but my home was surrounded by books, and we read every night. That's something I do owe him. We had readings. The whole family would get there and we'd read tremendous classics. We read *Vanity Fair* and *Tom Jones* and so on. We read some of the timeliest *Book of the Month Club* things, too, like *Anthony Adverse* and *Gone with the Wind*. And books of poetry and books about poetry. Mostly, though, he read. But the kids would read sometimes, too. I got injected with an awful lot of very fine academic background. Years later I discovered that it was better than the academic background a lot of people with letters after their names receive.

Which would seem to bear out the idea that a pleasurable education is the one that sticks tightest.

Not that it was pleasurable, but because it was a must. We had to have these readings. Eat dinner, take a bath, get ready for the reading, and go to bed. And the homework had to be done before all that.

I also found science fiction when I was a kid, and I really fell in love with it. First I went through the *Romances*, the pro-Raphaelite stuff—William Morris, and so on. And I just loved it—the castles and the dragons and the beautiful flowered boats, the drifting rivers and whatnot. Then Arthur Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* affected me profoundly. And, finally, I discovered H.G. Wells. But when I got into high school I found the SF magazines. Some kid was trading science-fiction magazines for a nickel apiece, as I recall. Good God, a nickel apiece! 1937 and '38 Astoundings—God.

So I brought them home, and my stepfather says, "What's that?" So I showed him. He said, "It's absolute trash, and I forbid you to bring this into the house." And he threw them away.

Well, I couldn't hold still for that. I kept bringing them home, but this time I hid them. There was this place—we lived on a fourth-floor apartment, and in the closet was a hatch that opened into the air space above the ceiling. I crawled up there and went back to the exposed beams—there were four or five of them—and stashed the pulps. They were really well stashed.

One day I came home from school and he said, "There's a mess in your room that I want you to clean up." He frequently said that, because I'd leave clothes or tools or something like that lying around. Well, when I went in, it was literally covered, wall to wall, with tiny little pieces of paper no bigger than postage stamps. He'd found my stash, and it must have taken him hours to have torn up every single one of those little tiny pieces and then scatter them all over the room. My beloved science-fiction magazines.

And I think that was what really turned me to science fiction. Well, there is one other factor. Outside of poetry there's no other field of literature which is absolutely without limit. You can go anywhere! Past, present, future, to another planet. Anything or anywhere. That kind of wingspread really did appeal to me.

It would seem your relationship with your stepfather was one long conflict.

There were conflicts. Some of them were just desperate conflicts. For example, he was obsessed with sex, and like many people of his generation he was obsessed with masturbation. When he found out that I masturbated he sent me to a psychologist, and the psychologist gave me a series of tests and whatnot, and came out with a perfectly clean bill of health. He informed my stepfather that this was normal behavior. My stepfather wouldn't accept that, so he had me taken to a criminal psychiatrist. Now, this guy was in the papers at the time as the prosecuting attorney's witness against someone who'd chopped his wife up and then left her body in packages in various places around Philadelphia. All this psychiatrist did was to tell me that I should never masturbate because it wasn't good for me. He also gave me a lot of physical tests, and told me I should probably eat more bacon and stuff with fat in it, because my blood showed a little lack of these quantities. But that was it. I don't think my stepfather ever forgave the whole psychological/psychiatric corpus because of that.

An interesting paradox, that a man with that high an intellect and education should retain that attitude.

He did. Mostly, though, he was five-foot-four, which was his real difficulty. I never really realized that until later.

I understand that you originally wanted to be a gymnast.

I was. See, when I was a kid, I went away to a boarding school for a year, where I learned how to smoke and gamble, and essentially not much else. I was in the fifth grade at the time, going into the sixth. When I came home... Well, my brother was ultimately sent back for a second year, and my parents decided to put me into summer school.

Now, my stepfather told me that if I did well in summer school, I'd get something I'd always wanted. But he wouldn't tell me what it was. So I worked my butt off. I had never been in the sixth or seventh grade, mind you, and here I was taking 8B, the second half of eighth grade in summer school. There were four basic subjects, and I finally ended up, on a scale of ten, with three "8's" and a "9." His response was, "Why aren't they four '9's'?" Then he said, "I'll tell you what I was going to give you. I was going to give you a bicycle. But now you're not going to get it." He could have spared me that.

So, anyway, I got into high school when I was only twelve years old. And I was totally lost. I was very thin, the original 97-pound weakling. I had a mass of cotton-colored hair, and I was very spindly. Kind of elfin looking. A natural target for all the bullies.

I remember Moskowitz, in your section of Seekers of Tomorrow, saying that you arrived for registration wearing short pants and riding a scooter.

Yeah. That was a period of absolute hell for me. For one thing, there was no such animal as buses, and my stepfather wouldn't come up with the carfare. So I had to walk three miles to go to school and three miles to come back home. In all weathers.

There used to be gangs of kids who'd lay for me to beat me up on my way to school and beat me up on my way back home. I learned more ways how to go back and forth from that school—I even learned how to limp, because people wouldn't hit a cripple. It was just a nightmare.

And then one day in assembly, in my first year in high school, they had a gymnastics exhibition on stage. And I was absolutely thrilled. One of the kids who was performing was in one of my classes, mechanical drawing. I'll never forget him. A red-headed kid called Pat Napolitano. He was built like a wedge. His stuff was the parallel bars, and he was absolutely incredible.

So I went out for the gym team. Which appeared everybody. It was just laughable. But in eighteen months I grew four inches and gained sixty-five or seventy pounds, and then became Captain of team. And all that bullying business stopped. It stopped altogether. It was like a brand-new life for me, made all the difference in the world. It didn't matter that I didn't have the clothes, that I couldn't date the girls, never had any money, or any of that. Those things were overridden by the

fact that I had become a celebrity, with a big athletic letter on my shirt.

So I then got a two-year scholarship to Temple University. An athletic scholarship, and also a scholarship membership to Philadelphia Turngemeinde, which is a German organization concerning German gymnastics. Now, all the while I'd been fascinated with the circus. My ambition was to be an aerialist, a flyer with Barnum & Bailey. So at this point my whole life was blueprinted out. All I would do is graduate from high school, go into college at Temple, pick up a degree in physical education, go to Sarasota and join Barnum & Bailey, and become a flyer. And that would be that.

But when I was fifteen I came home from the swimming pool with my hair wet, and I caught a bad cold. A couple of days later I had a high fever. Now, not going to school was unspeakable. You went to school, and that was that. So—I

"I got into high school when I was only twelve years old. And I was totally lost."

dragged myself there with a fever. I did it again the second day, but this time the fever was really high and my joints were all aching. I remember just literally dragging myself up the hill. I even stole some money from my mother's purse so I could take the streetcar home from school. I just couldn't face walking again. How I got through that day I don't know. It was just a misadventure.

The third day I couldn't get out of bed at all. Every one of my joints was aching. By actual count I had twenty-eight separate toothaches and a fever that was just appalling. I literally could not get out of bed.

So they called the doctor. I had acute rheumatic fever, and an inflamed and enlarged heart. It was enlarged by sixteen percent. It was so big it would literally poke out from between the ribs on every beat. You could see it across the room. When I came out of the fog I told the doctor, "I've got to get back in, the season is just beginning, you know I'm the Captain of the team." And the doctor said, "You forget about gymnastics this season. As a matter of fact, you'd better forget about gymnastics altogether." Which was just terrible, an incredible blow.

I was four months flat on my back. At that time, you know, there were no wonder drugs at all. I got through it on aspirin and bed rest. That was all they could do for it. But I made a most fantastic recovery, really incredible.

It had hit me in December, and in the following June my parents went to Europe with my brother. I was sent up to

Canada to stay with my uncle, to recuperate, and to walk one mile a day. Then—I suppose because of the shattering of everything I'd ever wanted—I was really suicidal. Literally. I did everything I could. I dove, I swam, I wrestled, I jogged, I rode bicycles up and down mountains. Just everything. And by the time fall came around, I passed a competitive examination with 2500 applicants for the Pennsylvania Nautical School. Only twenty-three applicants were taken, and just by lying about past cardiac difficulties I was one of them. I'd decided I wanted to go to sea. So I entered the Penn State Nautical School and later became a cadet in the Merchant Marine Academy.

But I couldn't stand that. It was a kind of miniature Annapolis. I took all that was coming to me as a Fourth-Class man. Yet they had hazing. And hazing was against the rules. Now, I was brought up as a rule obeyer. To have it written right down there, "There will be no hazing," and to see what kind of hazing went on... There were a lot of nice young sadists in the First Class who loved to stand people up for all kinds of things. They'd stand people up and have them stare at a rivet in the bulkhead, at rigid attention, for two and a half to three hours. Then they occasionally passed down the line and put a piece of rock salt in your mouth. It was just ghastly—it really was!

However, on the strength of my having been there for a term, I was able to go down to the Steamboat Commission and get myself Seaman's papers. I was seventeen at the time. Soon as I did that I took off and joined the Merchant Marine as an engine-room wiper. I was on freighters and tankers up and down the Coast, went to Central America, and stayed in for three years. Once [laughs] I even went to this Texas port and wrote some speeches for a local politician. This guy owned a general store, and he paid me off in day-old cupeakes. Believe me, I was so hungry, I appreciated it.

How did you start writing, anyway?

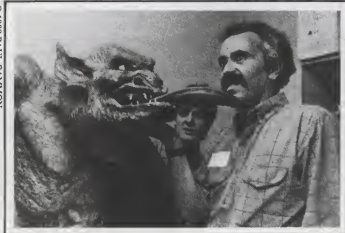
I was on ship, and I could see that at sixty bucks a month I was not gonna be able to run much. That was what they were paying then. No overtime. You got your meals, your linens, your soap, your matches, and sixty dollars a month. You were also on call, if necessary, eighteen hours a day. Now, the seaman's strike at this time was just over. Pay had been forty-five, forty-six dollars a month, and I happened to join the National Maritime Union just when it was born. We used to meet in lofts on the West Side of New York.

You know, we were in fo'c'sles when I was working on ship. Six to a fo'c'sle with the beds stacked two, sometimes three high for living onboard. And now it's two bunks to a room, sometimes one to a room. There are also very carefully regulated working hours, medical and fringe benefits, all kinds of stuff. Now, I think working people ought to be treated very well indeed, but when it gets to the extent that they jeopardize the very trade they're in because the prices get so high—well, I think that's a little self-destructive.

You say you began writing in these cramped fo'c'sles?

Yeah. You see, there's an interesting little story behind that. I had the idea of robbing the American Express Railway Company of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of dollars...

In our next issue, Sturgeon reveals how contemplating a life of crime led to a career in writing, nudism and working for television. Paul Sammon will also return with information on the Sturgeon of the Seventies; the profound changes in his appearance, economic circumstances and personality. Sammon will also chronicle what finally blew A Sense of Wonder—and his relationship with Sturgeon—apart.



Paul Sammon is a writer, producer, and actor with more than thirty years of experience in the entertainment industry. He is the author of the book *How to Write a Screenplay*, the first production of an animated film for the Screen Actors Guild and the U.S.A. As *Executive Producer* (1981), Sammon has produced numerous films, including *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *RoboCop*, and *The Young and the Restless*. He has written screenplays for films such as *Conan the Barbarian*, *Conan the Destroyer*, and *Conan the Adventurer*. Sammon is the American representative of the Tokyo-based television program *HollyWood*. Entertainment Weekly has named him "the most powerful man in Hollywood" and *Time* magazine has named him "the most powerful man in Hollywood".

SCENES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

© 1988 Alan Hutchinson

HELL

H.P. Margecraft's

10¢

SEPT. '86

Little Cth Lulu



TOO STRANGE

In 1978, Chicago police arrested Northwood Park resident John Wayne Gacy in connection with the disappearance of a teenage boy who had last been seen with Gacy. Investigation of his house and yard turned up 28 bodies and evidence connecting him with the murders of four other young men. A sensational trial followed, during which Gacy revealed the grisly details of the abduction, rape and murder of at least 33 young men. He earned the nick-name "The Killer Clown" when it was learned Gacy entertained at childrens parties and local events dressed as Pogo the Clown during the same period of time he was committing his murders.

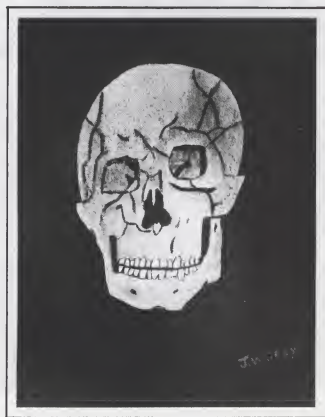
Gacy is serving a life sentence at Joliet State Prison and fills part of his time with painting. Some of his artwork is reproduced on the following pages.

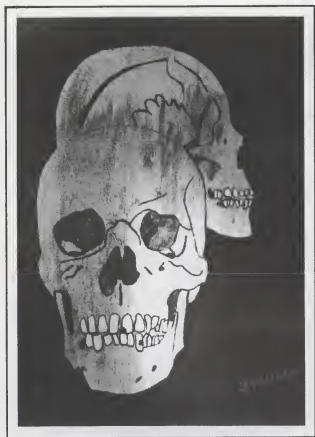
We'd like to thank Brian and Stuart at the Amok Gallery in Los Angeles for making them available.

PHOTOS BY DAVID J. SCHOW

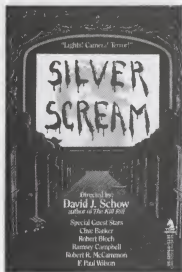








recommendations



Silver Scream

ed. David J. Schow
(Dark Harvest hardcover)
369pp, \$19.95
(Tor paperback)
470pp, \$3.95

THIS COLLECTION OF MOVIE-industry-related horror stories falls under the category of Things That, If They Didn't Exist, It Would Be Necessary To Invent. What could be more natural (indeed, if you think about it, *redundant*) than Hollywood horror stories all doing lunch together between the covers? Editor David J. Schow has cannily and courageously assembled here some of horror's brightest "young" talents, opting for (you'll pardon) fresh blood rather than some of the more conservatively oriented names readers have come to expect from more generic horror anthologies. If this book gets any sort of award, it ought to be an Oscar.

Best Editing: "Splatter: A Cautionary Tale," by Douglas E. Winter. "Splatter" is a pithy, clever commentary on the

possibility of violence caused by censorship (in the way of sublimation) rather than without it. The story moves like a rock video and is timed at least as well, with section titles from A to Z taken from horror movies and applied with Exacto-knife wit.

Best Cinematography: John M. Ford's "Preflash" is a nearly surgically precise (except for its obscure ending) tale of a cameraman who becomes a little too attached to his work—and vice versa. Lit in Ridley Scott purple-grays and grainy black-and-white, "Preflash" is atmospheric and evocative; Ford uses words like sniper bullets, lining them up with cool calculation and plugging them straight into your vitals.

Best Direction: "Pilgrims to the Cathedral," by Mark Arnold. If Ford is a careful sniper, Arnold is a raging juggernaut with a machine gun, firing a thousand bullets because he knows that some are bound to hit. Lots do. "Pilgrims" is the most ambitious of the anthology's stories, in which the rise and plummet of a semi-sentient drive-in serves as a model of the lost idealism of the Sixties. If Arnold drops a ball or two, no matter—better a writer juggle more than he can handle (and on his first published story, no less) than any number of "name brands" who toss one ball with the greatest of ease.

Best Make-Up Effects: "A Life in the Cinema," by Mick Garris. Otherwise known (or so editor Schow claims) as "the cock-sucking zombie baby story." He's not being hyperbolic. Garris (former story editor of *Amazing Stories* and director of *Critters 2*) spares no Dippity-do gooshy close-up in this tale of exploitation in the Industry-with-a-capital-I. Imagine an EC Comic written by someone who's been there. Barf us out!

Best Foreign Film: Steven R. Boyett's "The Answer Tree." *Eraserhead* in color. Nuff said?

Best Adaptation from an Already Existing Work: "Night Calls the Green Falcon," by Robert McCammon. Already optioned as a feature film, there's nothing

in this deliberately pulp-styled chapter-picture of a story that you haven't seen before: a whore with a heart of gold, a skid-row ex-actor who makes his last grab for the brass ring, a decrepit recluse with Secret Knowledge, a cab driver willing to go anywhere in Los Angeles (possibly the most unbelievable aspect of McCammon's story). But "Green Falcon" has what many better-written stories lack, and that's heart. Even while you wince, you're gonna wanna see the Green Falcon go out and kick some butt.

Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role: "More Sinned Against," by Karl Wagner. One of *Silver Scream's* seven reprint stories (out of twenty stories and a lengthy but enjoyable "credit roll" by Schow), Wagner's story is an unflinchingly personal depiction of how some people in Hollywood claw one another apart to attain such lofty goals as a personalized parking space. Even without its peripheral fantasy element, "Sinned" would rank as one of the strongest horror tales in the book, by virtue of the emotional onion-peeling our leading lady is put through. By reprinting this story Schow has rescued it from the relative obscurity of a small-press publication, and those who often complain of horror as a disturbingly misogynistic field would do well to read it.

(We switch from Academy Awards to Television Drama Awards, already in progress.)

Emmy for Best Dramatic Presentation on a Major Network: Ray Garton's "Sinema" is a smartly written tale of small-town hypocrisy and corruption. To give a "high-concept" description: *Blue Velvet* meets Stephen King's "Apt Pupil." Garton rarely lingers to exploit any deep ramifications in this tale of what sort of monster you might get if you don't let your kid go see those ookey movies, but that's okay. It may be tv, but it's good tv.

(We rejoice in the Academy Awards...) And the winner for *Best Picture* is:



"Night They Missed the Horror Show," by Joe Lansdale, hands down. Few people in this field have a stronger "voice" than Lansdale (picture Joe-Bob Briggs on speed telling you scary stories), and here he uses it to great effect in a tale of two bored, dumbrednecks with nothing better to do than get in trouble. They bite off more than they can chew, and Lansdale's story goes from a goofy, if toilet-humored, tale to as vicious a piece of business as I can remember reading. Sort of like starting off with a kiss and ending up with your lip bit off.

An anthology is doing pretty well if a reader is satisfied with even 50% of its stories. With *Silver Scream*, that percentage is more like 80%—and the mixture probably won't be the same for any two people, so varied and wide-ranging are Schow's choices. If you're tired of the same old creaking-staircase horror fiction, and want stories with some meat in them (and I use that word unhesitatingly), this is the anthology for you.

Wonder if they'll make a sequel?

— Steven R. Boyett

VESTED-INTEREST ALERT: Steven R. Boyett has a story in the *Silver Scream* anthology, and feels ethically obligated to say so here.



FAERIE TALE

by Raymond E. Feist
(Doubleday,
420 pages)

"THE WATER SPLATTERED OVER the boy and suddenly Patrick was no more. Hugging the wall was a creature about the same size as the boy, a squat, fat thing with spindly arms and legs, huge belly, and enormous penis. But its head was twice the size of the boy's and its face a frog mask of hate and rage, its wide mouth split in a hideous grimace. A long tongue lolled out between sharp teeth that could be seen even across the room. Frog eyes with yellows around red irises darted about the room. The creature's skin was a dull grey, and ears like small fans or seashells rose up on each side of its head. Both feet and hands were tipped with black-taloned fingers and toes. It was a nightmare made real."

Supremacy in genre seems to wobble back and forth between science fiction and horror/fantasy as each mines out a particular vein and awaits the next "new wave" of ideas. Certainly science fiction was dominant during the Sixties and mid-Seventies (having itself taken over from horror after World War II) until hit by several whammies; the politicizing of space exploration goals vis à vis "social priorities," general fatigue with Bug-Eyed Monsters, the sur-

prising popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien, and the blitzkrieg bopper from Bangor, who not only knew how to write fantasy/horror in a contemporary setting, but (crucially) could produce one bestseller after another, thus almost single-handedly building an audience that would always have another Stephen King book ready to read when it finished the current one. King accomplished what William Peter Blatty could not when he fizzled his career in metaphysics and the movies instead of milking *The Exorcist* for all it was worth. (The trend may be reversing again with Tom Clancy and others leading a resurgence of technowaporny-oriented, near-future science fiction)

Not many authors have been able to close ground on King's popularity. Dean R. Koontz has done the groundwork but hasn't broken out yet, and despite King's ordination, Clive Barker may have too many irons in the fire to focus even his considerable energies on building something more lasting than a flashy house of cards.

The latest shot at moving into the King-dom is *Faerie Tale*, by Raymond E. Feist, which was anointed with mainstream status as an offering of the Book of the Month club. Feist, already a fan bestseller with his *Riftwar* trilogy, has pegged a good tale illustrative of both the strengths and weaknesses of fantasy in its contemporary incarnation.

Faerie Tale has an up-to-date California family (he's a novelist/screenwriter, she's an ex-actress, two boys, one love-interest daughter) transplanted to a never-really-worked, heavily wooded farm in New York whose previous owner's origins are Shrouded In Mystery. Before you can say "Willow," the boys have discovered that there's Something Evil lurking under a bridge in the woods, as well as a more agile spirit that comes on like a Celtic Chippendale's stud out to sample the wares of the nubile daughter.



THE BEST OF MASQUES,

Edited by J.N. Williamson
(Berkley Books, 1988, 228 pages)

Partial explanation of what's going on comes from a young parapsychologist and his helper, who know something of the history of the owner. They explain that he was part of a group of German mystics who mysteriously fled their native lands at the turn of the century, just after a well-hushed series of events which may have included human sacrifice. In short order, both the boys and the daughter are attacked, while clues in the house lead to a hidden ceremonial room with robes and ancient scrolls, which in themselves lead to a buried chest filled with millions in antique gold coins, without realizing that in disturbing the chest, they've broken a centuries-old covenant that may unleash an interdimensional war between our world and the spirit realms.

Horror/Fantasy plots usually break into two parts. Mystery imbues the first part as everyone tries to figure out What's Going On? Once this is solved, Action/Adventure takes over as the good guys try to save their skin (and usually the world). *Faerie Tale* does just dandy in the first half as both good and bad characters from Celtic mythology begin to make their existence known. Once the mystery is more or less solved, however, the book becomes mostly standard Forces of Good vs. Forces of Evil adventure stuff. Although the book is a smoothly written page-turner, the characters are all pretty generic. King is an instructive comparison, because even though his plots are often undemanding, his characters have a depth, a sense of tragedy and self-awareness that Feist's lack. The story comes and goes, without much sense that the characters have changed or accomplished much. This is partially built into the structure of the story, but the same gimmick is present in King's *It*, and he was still able to use it more effectively.

Faerie Tale isn't a bad book. It is entertaining, but it isn't very memorable; it's nice while it lasts but, like the characters and their adventure, quickly forgotten.

—Michael Mayo

COLLECTED FROM *MASQUES* (1984) and *Masques II* (1987), this book is a rather unfocused collection of 22 stories. The authors represented certainly present an impressive survey of the masters of dark fantasy. However, the works are not necessarily focused on horror—most evident in the Ray Bradbury poem, "Long After Ecclesiastes." The poem is a slightly interesting comic variant of Whitman's work, but really doesn't belong in a collection of dark visions. The use of Bradbury's name on the cover should answer any questions about why the poem is included.

But there are plenty of stories worthy of your attention. The lead story, Robert McCammon's brilliant "Nightcrawlers," is foremost among them. The story, which was dramatized in the revived *Twilight Zone*, depicts the horrible reality of a Vietnam veteran's nightmares. Through the eyes of McCammon's narrator, a good ol'-boy Everyman, we experience one of these nightmares. The story is compelling and certainly deserves the praise which has been heaped upon it.

Richard Matheson's "Buried Talents" is a short piece about a mysterious man at a carnival who can toss a seemingly endless number of ping pong balls

into a fish bowl, much to the horror of the fat man running the game. The pacing on the story is great, and Matheson builds on the premise well. He fails to end the work with any kind of force, though—a promising few pages which lead nowhere.

Next is F. Paul Wilson's "Soft," a solid science fiction story about the survivors of a plague which destroys skeletal matter, leaving people quivering masses of flesh. The first-person narrative is particularly effective here and is manipulated for a strong ending.

"Second Sight," by Ramsey Campbell, is one of those works which demands a second reading. It's the story of a man who gets a second chance to experience something (I won't give away the plot), but, of course, ends up paying a high price for it. Campbell succeeds in making this rather tired plot interesting through his experiments in description throughout.

"Everybody Needs a Little Love" is a Robert Bloch story about the loneliness of modern living and the insanity desperation can cause. The story's surprise ending is expected about halfway through the story, which drags at points.

William Nolan's "The Yard" is an above-average tale of a man returning to his home town, only to find that a junkyard he saw as haunted when he was a boy still exists, and holds terrors more real than he imagined. Though parts of the plot, in which accidents happen and no one follows up on them, seem a bit far-fetched, Nolan succeeds in telling a chilling and very bizarre story.

"The Substitute" is a very odd tale of a classroom of children forming a gestalt to fight off an invasion of balloon people, led by their mysterious teacher. Gahan Wilson seems a bit rushed in telling this story. A little more development might have produced an interesting tale, but as is, the piece is rather chaotic.

"Maurice and Mog," by James Herbert, is a bomb-shelter version of "The Black Cat." This standard end-of-the-world story concerning a petty, paranoid man who gets his just desserts is extremely predictable, especially in its borrowings from Poe.

"Angels Exchange," on the other hand, is an interesting short piece in the tradition of Lord Dunsany's *Pegana* sto-



ries. Jessica Amanda Salmonson tells the story with all the restraint and style necessary to make such a mythic fragment interesting.

Steve Rasnic Tem's "Hidey Hole" is a good dark character study of a little girl who dreams of awful things which hide in places some children might like to play. The suggestion of things darker and more horrible than we can see in this short work is used very effectively by Tem to give the reader a far more developed story than the tale's length might first suggest.

Thomas Monteleone's "The Night Is Freezing Fast" and Charles Grant's "The Old Men Know" are both pretty standard Encounters-With-Death tales. The latter is the better of the two, though Grant draws the story out far too long.

"Splatter: A Cautionary Tale," by Douglas Winter, is excellent experimental fiction, with a unequivocal message. Winter tells the story of a group of people, all involved in one way or another with a bill prohibiting violence in film. The story is structured as an encyclopedia of horror film, and each fragment of the story resonates strongly with the film title under which it is presented. This creative use of the encyclopedia format, as well as the use of the zombie as a metaphor for the purveyors of censorship, make this story one of the best in the book.

"Czadek" is an unsettling story of poetic justice. Ray Russell sets up a caricature of a man who always exaggerates. The man is harmless enough though rather annoying. The ending, however, is disturbing. The punishment meted out to the braggart is far worse than his crime, and the story seems pointlessly cruel.

J.N. Williamson, the collection's editor, contributed "Wordsong." It's a story of an editor who gets simply fantastic submissions from a mysterious author who won't let the works see print. Though the story is adequate, the chatty, rambling style makes the story seem more like a personal anecdote from Williamson than a piece of dark fantasy.

"Down By The Sea Near The Great Big Rock" is a great work of understated terror. Joe Lansdale adopts a sparse, Hemingwayesque style in this story of a strange creature, and family members who slaughter each other. The overall effect is wonderfully chilling.

Charles Saunders' "Outsteppin' Fetchit," like the Ray Bradbury poem, is a mysterious entry in the anthology. The sons of Peanut Posey, a stereotyped black actor from Hollywood's dark ages, are haunted by his legacy of submission, and make him pay for it. While the story is powerful and well written, its horrors are perhaps too real to qualify it as a fantasy.

Dennis Etchison tells the story of a man who changes himself to fulfill the dreams of women, looking for someone who will need him. The biggest problem with "Somebody Like You" is the distance Etchison adopts from the narrative. The action depicted is too fragmented and dream-like, leaving the reader basically unaffected by the story.

"Third Wind," on the other hand, is a straightforward tale by Richard Christian Matheson. An obsessed achiever, a cold machine of a man, starts out on a fifty-mile run only to discover that he has become a perfect automaton: he can't stop. The story, almost an allegory, lacks any real subtlety, but is nonetheless compelling, as you watch the yuppie achieve himself to the end.

Alan Rogers has one of the longest stories in the anthology, and certainly one

of the best. The title, "The Boy Who Came Back From The Dead" (a Bram Stoker Winner) pretty much describes the basic plot. Rogers sets the story in small-town America. We follow the rather mundane adventures of the undead hero as he deals with his family and school (where bullies call him Zom-boy), as well as his encounters with the aliens who brought him back to life in the first place. Throughout all of this, Rogers displays a stylish restraint which makes the story both charming and disturbing.

The anthology closes with Stephen King's "Popsy," which focuses on a child snatcher who grabs the wrong child at a mall. While not King at his finest, the story is well written, and as with most stories of poetic justice, the ending is predictable. As usual, King's references to pop culture make the tale seem perversely commonplace.

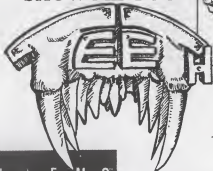
Though it generally avoids the more graphic trends in horror, *The Best of Masques* has something in it for everyone. However, in attempting to cover the vast range of horror fiction, and gather an impressive list of contributors from the earlier *Masques* books, Williamson has compiled a group of stories which vary wildly in both quality and focus.

—Jim Lowder



Comics

SHOW ME YOUR



©WILBER 88

BY JAMES VAN HISE



ALIENS #1

(of a six-issue mini-series)
(Dark Horse Comics)

THIS HIGHLY ANTICIPATED mini-series is making a big splash in the comics world, but unfortunately it's largely because of the art.

I noticed the art of Mark Nelson when he was drawing a humor book for Now Comics a year and a half ago and I believed then that he was destined to make an important contribution to comics. His art is slick, polished and very well realized. The reader feels that what the artist sees in his mind is translated with painstaking accuracy on the page. He also employs the now all-but-abandoned technique of ben-day, an ap-

proach which was common in the Thirties and Forties but which has been largely forgotten today. In humor comics, Eastman & Laird have made fine use of the technique in the B&W versions of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

Nelson's art is perfect for science fiction, but is by no means sterile, and he can expand on his basic style to achieve powerful effects, as exemplified by the nightmare sequence on page 22. Needless to say, his rendering of everyone's favorite modern movie monster is an exercise in precision and power. Would that the story he was illustrating was as good.

In the broadest sense, Mark Verheiden's plot is okay—it's on close examination that it frays and falls apart.

In the background given for Hicks (the character played by Michael Biehn in the film), it's stated that while he was in the hospital after his near fatal encounter on Acheron, that he had no visitors. It the film it was clear that he and Ripley had become friends, so why wouldn't she have visited him? His character is also portrayed here as being hideously scarred from being splashed with the alien blood. First, that blood acts as a molecular acid when exposed to air. Had the wounds been that serious, the blood would have burned all the way through his head. Since he's still alive and the scars are obviously superficial, however ugly they may appear, they could easily have been repaired surgically. Even in the Twentieth Century we can do that, much less a couple hundred years from now. So this reduces his deformity to a clumsy plot manipulation.

Hicks is portrayed as a pariah because of his encounter with aliens, which had to have been pretty widely reported for him to encounter this stigma wherever he goes. So if everyone knows about the aliens, how come the Coast Guard shuttle pilots don't recognize the alien for what it is when they see it on page 11? That's not a face one would ever forget, and with computer technology, the entire story of the fight on Acheron would have been recreated as a simulation for everyone to see on TV.

This leads in to the line on page 13 which goes, "I saw a guy tear his suit once. He had time for one scream—then his blood began to boil—" No. That's the kind of idiocy promulgated in ridiculous movies like *Outland*. It doesn't happen that fast. Verheiden should read Clarke (see "A Breath Of Fresh Vacuum" in *The View From Serendip*) instead of relying on stupid movies for scientific reference. Actually, a person could probably survive up to two minutes in a vacuum—even if it's in deep space.

Another point is that the hospital Newt is confined in is a chamber of horrors. Why? Why would modern psychiatric care be this poor hundreds of years in the future? Is this a particularly inept and poorly run hospital or meant to reflect the decay of the society in general? We don't know. When you're describing the future, things like this cannot just be presented as a given with no explanation.

Although this is several years after the disaster on Acheron, there has apparently been no research done on the molecular acid of the alien blood to create a neutralizer. Why not? If the Company wants to exploit

the aliens, they would first want to be able to protect themselves from them on some level, but there's no indication that any thought along these lines is going on.

And finally, the most profound mistake of all, is the reason that Newt is alone. While not yet revealed in the first issue, advance publicity on the comic explains that Ripley abandoned Newt and just left. While the inability to use the character of Ripley contractually is understandable, a more logical explanation for her absence should have been thought of because the entire glue which holds the story of the movie *Aliens* together and gives it strength is the depth of Ripley's affection for Newt. Even a little research on the part of the writer would have revealed that this was partially because Ripley's real daughter died three years before Ripley awoke from hypersleep. Ripley needed Newt to help start rebuilding her life. Saying that Ripley just couldn't handle it and split for parts unknown goes to the very core of the characterization problems in this story. Verheiden's idea of characterization seems to consist of portraying people who are haunted by their past and try to run away from it, and they all react in the same way, as though they were clones. Different people would react differently. Hicks in particular would be better equipped to deal with what happened than Ripley or Newt and would not turn inward unless he was too weak to have ever been a Marine to begin with. Surely somebody was able to come through that ordeal while displaying a little backbone. Ripley certainly seemed to in the film. In the comic she turns her back on her foster child and runs off. Not a very thoughtful approach.

And all of this is just in the first issue. Not a very promising start, however good the artwork is. Comics are a synthesis of story and art. One should not have to make up for the shortcomings of the other.



BASIL WOLVERTON'S GATEWAY TO HORROR #1

(Dark Horse)

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS FIRST collecting Basil Wolverton's work 15 years ago that it was considered quirky, obscure and esoteric—an acquired taste that many fans weren't interested in acquiring. Now his unique, imaginative and downright weird visions are considered some of the finest work which comic books ever produced, and when Wolverton died in 1978 he was just starting to see his genius being appreciated by modern comic artists and connoisseurs.

Now it is more than just being appreciated, it is being preserved. This is at least the fourth comic in the past year completely devoted to reprinting his stories, including

one in 3-D (a medium I think is more of a gimmick than an accomplishment). Each discusses the profound effect that Wolverton's singular comic art vision has had on those creators who encountered it, and with the stories presented to make their own argument for his genius at powerful linework.

Wolverton lived in the Pacific Northwest and dealt with the New York publishers through the mail, a rarity then although it's commonplace enough now. He generally wrote his own stories and came up with plots which were much weirder than his contemporaries tended to dream up. *Gateway To Horror* features two of the only stories Wolverton didn't write, although they're just as strange as any he did. The author of these other two stories is Daniel Keyes, a writer who achieved prominence in the Sixties for his book *Charly* (and the film of the same name).

Basil Wolverton's art has a punch which is almost visceral. While working within the confines of comics of the day (and even precode horror comics had their limitations, despite what some would have you believe), Wolverton created a world where nightmares were captured with pen and ink and examined with detail. His imagery wasn't shocking, though, so much as it was disturbing. It could get under your skin and be difficult to forget. Although I'd been used to seeing his work in color in the old comics, seeing it in B&W brings a whole new level of appreciation to it (*Dark Horse's Planet Of Terror #1* published earlier this year also features Wolverton in B&W). It's clear that Wolverton wasn't depending on color to add impact to his work—he intended it to function whether it was in color or not. His use of shadow and contrast becomes much more evident in B&W and the work seems to have more dimension here as well. It is amazing comic art, both stylistically and conceptually.

Less often seen in Wolverton's Forties SF adventure strip, the long running *Spacehawk*, which is soon to be brought back into print by Dark Horse, thus adding to the important task of preserving Wolverton's genius for modern readers.





SCARLET IN GASLIGHT #3

(Eternity Comics)

WHILE SHERLOCK HOLMES HAS encountered Dracula before in one pastiche and another, I don't believe it has been quite as well wrought as this. Eschewing the traditional portrayal of Dracula as a monster, here we see the vampire as a romantic, even tragic figure, who in this case is being betrayed by Prof. Moriarty. While the art by Seppo Makinen isn't bad, it's the writing by Martin Powell (with co-plotter Wayne R. Smith) which immediately involves us in this story and reveals that this isn't just another bland treatment of a good idea. The art captures the look and feel of the 19th century while the writing nails down the important elements of story and atmosphere. A lot of it may seem too wordy for comics, but yet it's all necessary text. I began reading this just for review and ended up looking forward to the next issue. There's impressive work here from the writer, and the final twist, that it seems that Holmes may be teaming up with Dracula against Moriarty, holds out more than just an average plot for the next issue.

The artwork, although good, could stand a little zipatone work in place of the limitations of linework valiantly used to try to attain certain effects. Use the right tool for the job and the results can be stupendous.



EDGAR ALLAN POE #1

(Eternity Comics)

POE COULD RIGHTLY BE TERMED the godfather of the genre as his work helped to legitimize horror as literature, and its existence continues to legitimize horror in spite of the taint of most horror films.

This issue features adaptations of three Poe tales: "William Wilson," with art by Font, "The Tell Tale Heart" drawn by Ricardo Villamonte and "Facts In The Case Of M. Valdemar," which is drawn by Cardona. All were previously published in the early Seventies B&W horror magazines *Psycho*, *Nightmare* and *Scream*, which are not that easy to come by any more.

The adaptations are very good and the art captures the flavor of the time in which they were written, treating them as the nineteenth century tales they are.

While "The Tell Tale Heart" has been adapted numerous times, the other two are less often seen in this format, and form a good cross-section of Poe's fiction for those who think only of "The Masque of the Red Death" when Poe's name comes up. It's good to see all facets of horror being explored in comics, not just the modern and explicit kind.



SCAVENGERS

#1-3

(Quality Comics)

DINOSAURS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN particularly fascinating, perhaps because they are monsters which actually once existed. Stories featuring them inevitably emphasize their power over the comparatively puny human being. The British weekly *2000 A.D.* has been using dinosaurs in their violent, cynical comic strips for years and now these are being reprinted in color in *Scavengers*.

Their main strip to feature dinosaurs is a series aptly titled "Flesh." It's based on the idea of mankind in the distant future using time travel to herd up dinosaurs and slaughter them like cattle for the feed needs of a future era. But while dinosaurs are being harvested for their flesh, the huge reptiles manage to hunt down more than a few humans to satisfy their own primal hungers. This series tends to set up humans in dangerous settings so that dozens of them can be gobbled up by the thunder lizards, showing that the title just doesn't refer to the harvesting of dinosaurs. Like other British science fiction series, these stories have a particularly hard-edged, gritty tone in which the innocent as well as the guilty are consumed by the reptilian furies. Children (tourists from the 23rd century) are not spared this fate either, which might make the stories a bit too disturbing for some readers.

Basically this series appeals to the slaver 13 year old in us who loved movies where dinosaurs ate people up and stomped them into the ground. Now we get to see it in a monthly color comic book, and a very well drawn comic at that.

GORE SHRIEK #4

(Fantaco Enterprises Inc.)

HOW CAN YOU RESIST A COMIC with a name like that? Just looking at it we see that it represents all the worst fears of parents over what their cherubs might be reading. Inside it represents the best and the worst of what the genre is capable of, the zenith and the nadir, the treasures and the trash.

The front cover of a crazed little girl eating the bloody intestines of the doll she's dismembered is so over the top that it's impossible to be offended by it because it's just so patently absurd. About the only time that wallowing in gore can be forgiven is when it's funny, such as in *Return of the Living Dead* and *Evil Dead II*.

The lead story, "Sleeper" by Steve Bissette, is a 4 page oddity about a little boy whose parents lock him in a drawer whenever they go out. It shows more subtlety than most of the other stories in here.

"Collector's Item" by Augustus Matlick III and Rolf Stark is a wordless entry about a horror fan who starts hallucinating that the creatures of his fantasies are after him. It's interesting and the strange art style captures the desperation of the central character quite well.

"Borders" seems to be about disembodied beings who are about to take over the body of absolutely the wrong man.

"Circular File" by Tom Skulan and Greg Capullo is a story which captures the aimlessness of so many lives almost entirely without dialogue, as well as capturing the inescapability of it. Could this be Hell?

"Karma" by Rolf Stark and Marlene Stevens is just an exercise in senseless gore, badly drawn senseless gore at that. It's almost as though someone thought that they needed a story in bad taste to liven things up and live up to the promise of the magazine's title.

The highlight of the issue is the 16 page article by Steve Bissette, "The Premature Burial: Monster Magazines and the Rebirth of Horror Comics." In this article, Steve traces the slow return of horror comics after their crash in the Fifties when the CCA was instituted. It's a thorough and exhaustive study liberally illustrated with examples from the magazines discussed.

This is a horror comic which makes the effort to try to do many different things, and it succeeds at most of them.

SHADOWWALKER

#1

(Aircel Publishing Limited)

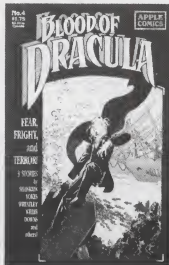
THIS SERIES, WRITTEN BY GORDON Derry and drawn by Tom Grummett, is a typical action/horror series which is drawn well enough to be one of the better Marvel comics but relies on much less text than Marvel and DC feel they must have in order for a comic to exist. In other words, the dialogue and captions don't redundantly describe what we're already seeing in the art. It's your typical demon-hunter story of one man's obsession with hunting down the practitioners of the black arts, which in this case happen to be from another world. The main character's name is Shadrak Walker, ergo the title. It's an effective series, and while there aren't many surprises, it's highly entertaining and promises to be one worth keeping your eye on.



BLOOD OF DRACULA

(Apple Comics)

I TOOK A LOOK AT THE FIRST issue of this last time, but as I write this it's up to #5 and has developed into a very good series. The three continued stories are well conceived and deal with Dracula in three different time periods. It presents the traditional, evil Dracula, but so far in this series he manages to keep winning even though the protagonists in the stories tend to be portrayed sympathetically. It's a fine series, focusing as much on character conflict and confrontation as much as it does on the victims Dracula stalks. It's a black and white series which makes good use of the medium and I'm enjoying it more and more each issue.



HIS LAST INVENTION

BY JAMES VAN HISE

IN THE GREENFIELD VILLAGE AND HENRY FORD MUSEUM IN DEARBORN, MICHIGAN IS A FLASK CONTAINING THOMAS EDISON'S LAST BREATH.



INTERMINGLED WITH THE SPICES OF HIS DYING GASP, SWIMMING AMONG STALE AIR AND EFFLUVIUM THAT FLED HIS MORTAL COIL, IS THOMAS EDISON'S SOUL.

IT SCREAMS UNSEEN, TRAPPED IN A SPECIAL FLASK DESIGNED BY THE INVENTOR'S OWN HAND OF GLASS SPUN FROM A METEORITE AND MELTED AND SHAPED IN THE HEARTH OF A GLASS-BLOWER OF EDISON'S ACQUAINTANCE.

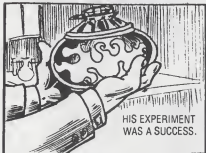


THE MOUTH OF THE FLASK HAD BEEN GENTLY HEATED UNTIL SOFT, AND WHEN EDISON GASPED HIS LAST HE SIGNALLED THAT HIS FINAL EXPERIMENT COME INTO PLAY.

Art © 1988 MAHON FAWCETT



SO HIS FINAL BREATH WAS SNATCHED FROM ITS FLIGHT TO ETERNITY, TRAPPED IN THE CONTAINER AND SEALED WITH A GLASS STOPPER MADE FROM THE SAME UNEARTHLY CRYSTAL FROM WHICH THE REST OF THE FLASK HAD BEEN FASHIONED. AIRTIGHT, IT WAS ALSO SOUL-TIGHT—THE FIRST OF ITS KIND.

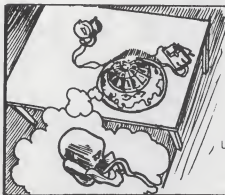


HIS EXPERIMENT WAS A SUCCESS.



HIS INTELLIGENCE HAD BEEN PRESERVED AS HE HAD PLANNED, BUT TRAPPED, IT HAD NOWHERE TO GO AND NOTHING TO DO.

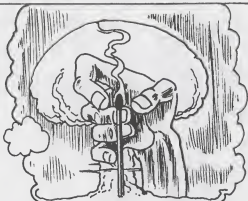
NO RECEPTICAL FOR RECYCLED SOULS HAD YET TO BE CONTRIVED, NOR EVEN A WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH ONE. SO EDISON'S LAST WISH HAD BEEN FULFILLED WITH NO ONE OF HIS GENIUS TO CARRY IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL.



THOMAS EDISON BECAME THE FIRST LIBERATED SOUL CONSIGNED TO A GENUINE PURGATORY RATHER THAN MIGRATING INTO THE BODY OF A CHILD SLIDING DOWN THE BIRTH CANAL. THIS IS WHY NO ONE OF HIS PECULIAR GENIUS (HE INVENTED DEVICES, ANY ONE OF WHICH, CAN BE REGARDED AS HAVING UNDENIABLE IMPACT ON LIFE IN THE 20TH CENTURY) HAS COME ALONG SINCE.



SENTIENT AND AWARE
OF WHAT PASSES IN REALITY
BEYOND HIS TINY SARCOPHAGUS, HE
HAS DEVISED A MEANS TO NEUTRALIZE
NUCLEAR CHAIN REACTIONS—AT ANY POINT
IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT.



SHORT OF HIS BEING FREED BY A CLUMSY TOURIST, EDISON
EXPECTS THAT WWII WILL BRING HIS RELEASE AND HE
WILL BE REBORN IN A WORLD SORELY IN NEED OF HIS LIKE.



letters

Dear James and Jessie,

I've just received my copy of the first issue of *Midnight Graffiti* from Bob Weinberg, and most impressive it is too. It's rare to see such a quality production put together by people with an obvious feel and affinity for the field. I don't think I've seen such an impressive new magazine since the days of *Shayol*.

As for the continuing debate on quiet horror vs. splatter, I firmly come out on the side of quiet horror. I can see no skill or merit in splatter horror at all, whilst there is considerable skill and consequently more effective chill in portraying a graphic scene in moderate terms. One of the problems today is that it seems audiences want more graphic horror on the screen and this has to be reflected in the printed word, and that just seems one of the prices we have to pay for living in today's grim world. But there's always enough sophisticated horror around for me to enjoy without having to resort to the guts and entrails brigade, albeit I find myself reading it for the purposes of review or research. The graphic horror work has always been around, but once used to be described as Grand Guignol. If you read some of the fiction by Charles Birkin you'll find some choice corporeal horror which was shocking for the state of the art at that time.

Sincere best wishes,
Mike Ashley
Walderslade
Chatham, Kent
England

Dear Jessie/James:

A little feedback on the first issue of *Midnight Graffiti*: I was shocked, nauseated and appalled—keep up the good work! In particular I was exhilarated upon reading my first Schow piece. The man has done the only writing, fiction or non, I ever read that portrayed the Hollywood I live in.

Sincerely,
F. Valentine Hooven III

Dear Sirs:

WILL TRADE: 1 set of Centerline Mags, Rochester Quad and a 327 3/4" cam in exchange for OE interior for '58 Plymouth. Contact Darnell's Garage, Libertyville, Pennsylvania. Ask for Arnie.

Dear Sirs:

...There's a bright, uncopied feel and look to *Midnight Graffiti* which is suitable to the publication's approach...I thought the reviews were excellent, Harlan first-rate as ever.

My main comment that is remotely negative is simply that it's easier writing splatterpunk—unless an editor is there who knows you're either pretending or having him on...

J. N. Williamson

Dear Sirs:

We are hoping you can help us contact Whitley Strieber. We left our wallets at his house, and he won't return our calls.

Sincerely:
A friend



Dear Sirs:

Mom is dead
I'm so alone
Oh, Mama
Won't you please come home?

N. Bates



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"Like Pavlov's Dogs"
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"Jerry's Kids Meet Wormboy"
D: JOE LANDSVALE
"On the Far Side of the
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E: ROBERT MACAMMON
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"Home Delivery"
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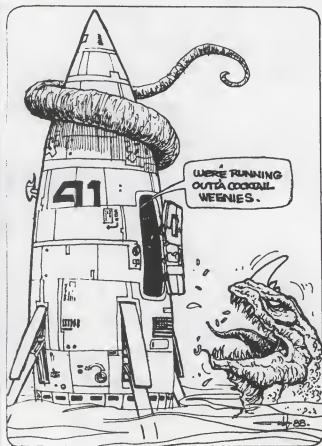
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NORMAN BATES DID!!!

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"I WISH THEY HAD THESE WHEN I WAS A KID!" — ED GEIN

